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December 1992

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Premier Computer Game Magazine

Interplay's 'Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space'

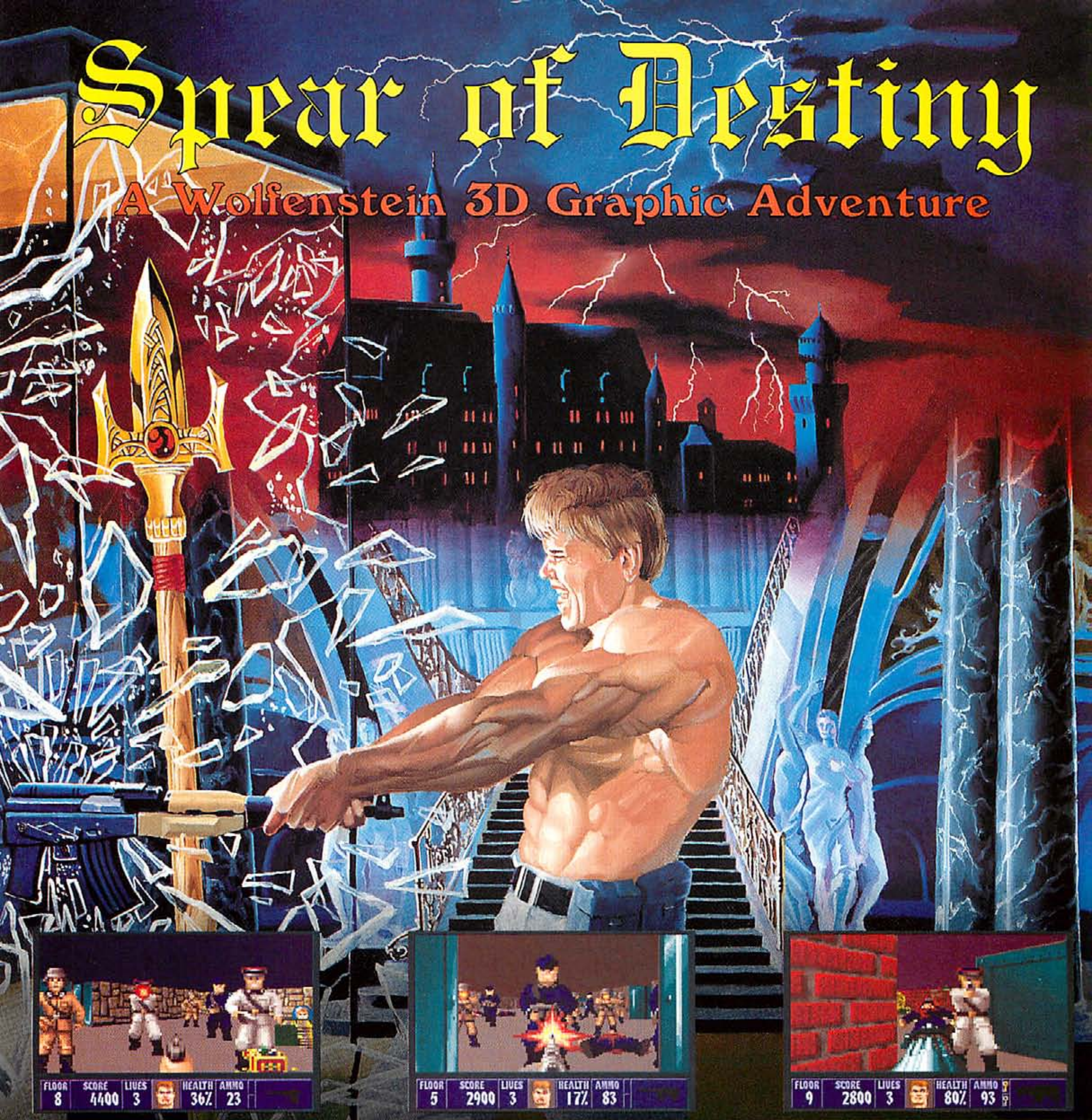
6th Annual Holiday Buying Guide

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Race for Space 8



Darklands 76

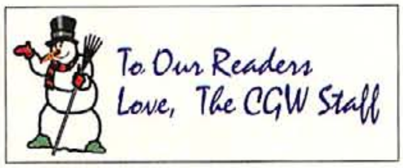


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Features



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Psalms 9:1-2

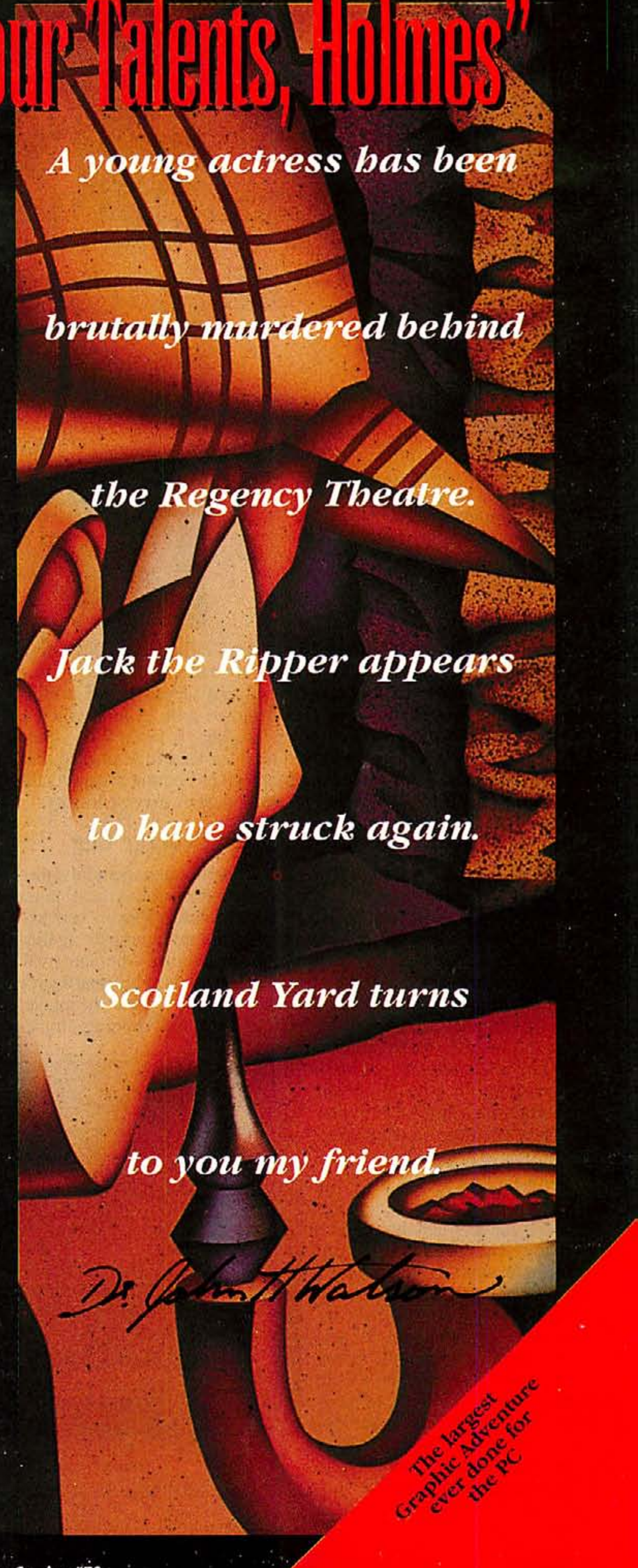
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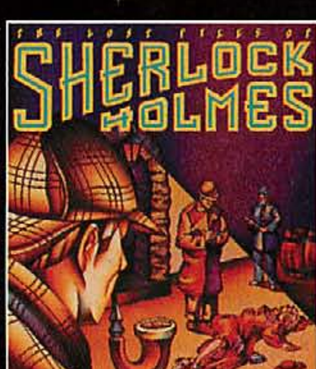
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To The Moon, Alice!

Interplay Lifts Off with *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space*

Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" that CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the final work on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is finished.

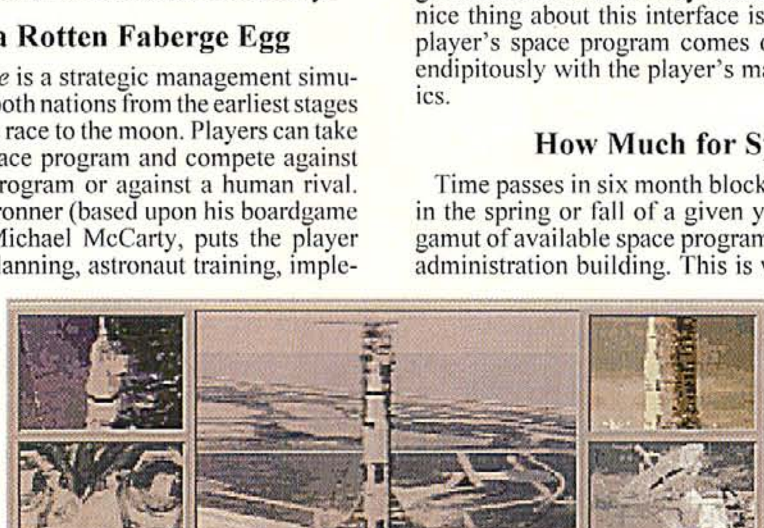
By Mike Weksler

When Sputnik-1 dropped into free-fall orbit in October of 1957, the tiny 184 pound payload (little more than a thermometer and a radio beacon) served as the starting gun for the space race. The U.S. tried to gain ground when it launched the Explorer-1 satellite on January 31, 1958. Who would have believed that the U.S. would take the lead little more than a decade. *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space* gives computer gamers the chance to see if they can win that same race or reverse history.

Last One There Is a Rotten Faberge Egg

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space is a strategic management simulation of the space programs of both nations from the earliest stages of satellite launches through the race to the moon. Players can take the reigns of either nation's space program and compete against either a computer-controlled program or against a human rival. The game, designed by Fritz Bronner (based upon his boardgame *Liftoff*) and programmed by Michael McCarty, puts the player directly in charge of mission planning, astronaut training, implementation of various space programs, hardware procurement, research/development expenditures and last minute launch schedule adjustments.

Yet, even though the game is based on solid research and offers multiple tracks upon which players can succeed in winning the space race, it is not a game with a tremendous learning curve. A dynamic map of a spaceport (more accurately, an amalgam of several locations in both space programs) serves as an iconic main menu. Gamers can navigate through research and development facilities, player records (disguised as a space museum), procurement departments, astronaut training facilities, mission control and the launch pad, at will. One can even point and click on Washington and the Kremlin on the respective horizons in order to get instructions and make appropriate decisions. Once these iconic buildings are chosen, the gamer can sort through dozens of sub-menus, many of which are illustrated with digitizations of historic photos or new 3-D drawings. Later in the game, players can click on the moon to get their latest lunar survey results prior to the moon landings. The nice thing about this interface is that the spaceport grows as the player's space program comes on-line. Ideally, this occurs serendipitously with the player's mastery of the program's mechanics.



Mission Control: Apollo 11 prior to liftoff

How Much for Spam in the Can?

Time passes in six month blocks with each turn occurring either in the spring or fall of a given year. Players are given the entire gamut of available space programs from their very first visit to the administration building. This is where all programs are initiated. In fact, as missions become more complex, many programs must be co-developed simultaneously in order to achieve the mission's success.

What this means is that gamers will not necessarily have to opt for the "spam in the can" approach (astronauts placed in small capsules with very few controls to help them determine their own fate) that was actually used in the U.S. space program. Gamers can create their own paths and rewrite history.

In order to initiate a particular space program, the player will need to purchase the requisite hardware with mega-

bucks (an abstract monetary unit used in the game). Reflecting reality, initial hardware purchases are always more expensive than subsequent purchases. Since the main cost is in initiating programs, stocking up on existing hardware should not prove a problem as the game progresses.

The second phase of each turn will likely require the player to enter the research facility and allocate research megabucks on new and existing space progams. Naturally, the more time and megabucks invested in R&D, the more likely the program is going to be successful. Of course, time is one of the constraints in the game. It takes successful launches to gain prestige and prestige to guarantee funding. If the opposing space program keeps garnering all the "firsts" in the space race, the player is likely to be removed as director of his/her respective space program. So, there is always this tension between being first and being safe.



U.S. Spaceport.

For the US, these are the following historical and proposed space programs from which to choose:

Explorer:	Earth satellite
Ranger:	Lunar/planetary satellite
Surveyor:	Lunar probe
Atlas:	Rocket
Titan:	Rocket
Saturn V:	Rocket
Nova:	Rocket
Boosters:	Strap on
Mercury:	1 man spacecraft
Gemini:	2 man spacecraft
Apollo:	3 man spacecraft
Jupiter:	4 man spacecraft
XMS-2:	Mini shuttle
Eagle:	Lunar module
Cricket:	Lunar module
Kicker a:	Booster
Kicker b:	Booster
EVA suits:	Extra vehicular activity suits

Fortunately, one can keep tabs on the opposing program by accessing the CIA or KGB buildings respectively. As in real life, however, the intelligence supplied is not always reliable. Sometimes it may be dead on, while at others it can be pure fiction. The player will never really know until the game is over.

We Seven

Astronaut training begins by recruiting the seven original astronauts (if playing the historical roster game) and then, after a turn, taking them out of basic training and placing them into specialized training. Each astronaut is rated in six categories: capsule handling, lunar module piloting, EVA, docking, endurance and mood. As the player micro-manages the astronaut facility, he/she will soon realize that idle astronauts are a Freudian workshop. It is best to keep astronauts in specialized training when there are no immediate plans for their services.

Once programs are initiated, astronauts who rank high in capsule, docking, lunar module and endurance should be moved from their specialized training facilities into a manned program. It then becomes necessary to match astronauts into crews where their skills and psychological make-up complement the rest of the crew. Even with the best attributes, unhappy crew members put the performance of the mission at risk.

Mission Possible

Players also select the administration building in order to plan missions. Missions assigned during a given turn will be available for hardware assembly and launch during the next season. From the administration building, players may either cycle through all of the available missions which could possibly be assigned during the course of the game or use an event mask (somewhat analogous to a piano chord) to screen out the types of missions. The latter allows gamers to select certain aspects of a mission and lock them into place so that one need only view missions which utilize these aspects — a very useful feature considering the 300 possible combinations of missions.

The following space programs, both historical and proposed, are available for the Soviets:

Sputnik:	Earth satellite
Cosmos:	Lunar/planetary satellite
Luna:	Lunar probe
A-series:	Rocket
Proton:	Rocket
N-1:	Rocket
Vulkon:	Rocket
Boosters:	Additional Stage for above Rockets
Vostok:	1 man spacecraft
Voskhod:	2 man spacecraft
Soyuz:	3 man spacecraft
Kvartet:	4 man spacecraft
Lapot:	Mini shuttle
Duet	Lunar module
Razvedchik	Lunar module
Kicker a:	Booster
Kicker b:	Booster
Kicker c:	Booster
EVA suits:	Extra vehicular activity suits



Soviet Spaceport

After one has allocated all available resources, the turn comes to an end and Buzz himself enters the picture. He'll give players a good idea of how they're doing in the overall picture. If space permits, the final version will include digitized vocal advice in the same manner as the digital Chuck Yeager in **Electronic Arts'** *Chuck Yeager Air Combat.*

Next turn, everything revs up again with a news brief from either "Carter Walkrite" or "Svetlana Izvestia" setting the stage. This is where players find out about random events in the game such as funding cutbacks, breakthroughs in R&D and astronaut training accidents.

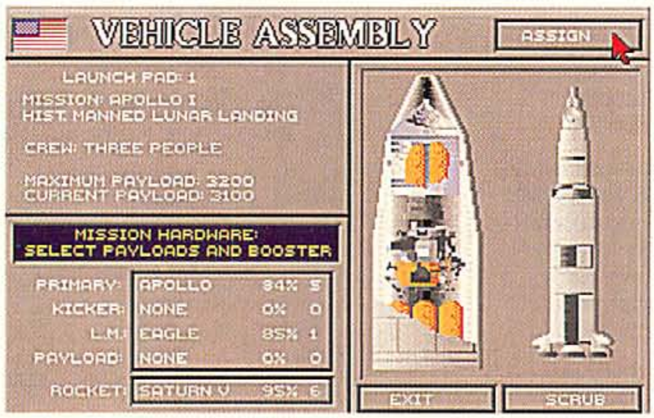
If missions are scheduled for this season, the player has one final chance to scrub a mission before the scheduled liftoff. Otherwise, the turn is played out much like the sequence described above. Fortunately, players will discover that both new funds and new hardware appear at the beginning of each new season. If missions were planned from the previous season, then the hardware will be waiting in the vehicle assembly building.



Planning the historic lunar landing

Vehicle assembly is where the player assembles the various components of a mission. Although one may have a manned orbital mission, the player may choose to substitute a Gemini capsule atop of a Titan rocket with boosters for the historic first manned orbital, instead of the default Mercury capsule atop the Atlas rocket. One time I ran out of Saturn V rockets and substituted a Nova rocket, which saved the mission.

It is here, along with mission planning, that one may play out missions in a variation-on-a-theme manner of actual historical events. For instance, in mission planning, one may decide that the direct ascent mission is safer in a particular season than the historic lunar landing mission. Also, the player may wish to have a joint lunar landing mission waiting on his/her other two pads in the event that the direct ascent mission proves to be a failure. I landed my astronauts on the moon in a joint mission in this manner when my historical lunar mission ended in disaster. If the requisite hardware is not available for a mission, the mission may be scrubbed from the vehicle assembly building. However, the player will have to schedule another mission from mission planning which will not take effect until the next season.



Assembling the Apollo 11 mission hardware

After assembling the hardware for each mission, the player needs to visit mission control to schedule each launch. Upon exiting the vehicle assembly building, one sees small animations of rockets being moved out to the launch pads. Up to three launches may be assigned or scrubbed. Also, the player may decide to downgrade a mission if it looks to be unsafe. For instance, one might need to cut out the docking phase of a manned orbital mission.

All Systems Go

Upon returning to a new season, players with missions ready to launch will see a brief mission summary and be given the choice of whether or not to launch. Once the launch sequence is initiated, the player will be transferred to the control room where one main monitor and four smaller ones display the mission using actual NASA video footage, conditionally executed based upon the selected mission. Each phase of the mission is depicted and failure may occur at any time during a mission.

According to Bronner and McCarty, one may land on the moon as early as 1964 and as late as 1976. Both cautioned, however, that it will be very hard to beat the U.S. program and its logical progression from the solo Mercury program, through endurance and docking testing with two-manned Gemini program, to the lunar flybys, orbits and finally, the lunar landing in the three man Apollo program. Yet, they insist that there is nothing stopping anyone from researching the Nova rocket and Jupiter spacecraft first and creating an alternate history.

The Eagle Has Landed

The gameplay in *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space* is a blend of the micro-management to be found in **Paragon**'s *Millennium* and the strategic level of management encountered in **Impressions**' *Air Bucks*. Although the game is detailed and historical, it does not require the tactical manipulation of **Virgin**'s *Shuttle*.

Since the game is turn-based, it is possible to e-mail saved games to friends. Devious gamers will note, however, that both players would have the ability to play ahead into the next turn and see what the other opponent is doing. So, the multi-player option (at the same computer) may prove the most logical.

Making The Headlines

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space has several groundbreaking features. The graphical user interface is well-implemented and extremely intuitive. The NASA footage is nicely rendered in VGA and there is enough variety in the footage to keep the visuals interesting for quite awhile. Of course, compact disk storage would allow the designers to include even more such vintage video and sound, and Fritz Bonner has mentioned that this is a definite possibility. Space historians can only hope.



Scheduling launches for the season

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space should serve as the "launch vehicle" for multi-media games and may do for historic simulations of its kind, what Sputnik-1 did for the space race. CGW

Can Furballs Really Fly?

There's only one way to find out. Jump into *Wing Commander*, the game series that defined interactive entertainment on the PC. You're whisked to the front lines and left in the middle of an intergalactic brawl with a bunch of flea-bitten, battle-scarred felines from Kilrah.



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CGW's 6th Annual Holiday Buying Guide

This year's Holiday Buying Guide is dedicated to our celebrative readers whether they're snow-bound or beach bound, religious, agnostic or atheist. This list is designed to provide as many screenshots and descriptions of upcoming games as space will allow. Our hope is that our readers can circle the interesting titles and pass this article along to their personal Santa, Father Christmas, sugar daddy, parents, spouse or significant other.

As has been the tradition with the Holiday Buying Guide, most of the products covered should be on the shelves by the time this issue hits the stands, but some are sure to miss their expected ship dates. Our editorial staff has tried to be extra careful about the products in this year's guide and hope to have a better batting average than in the last couple of years. Also, since we have not seen all of these games in their final form, mention in the guide does not equal a complete recommendation. Nevertheless, we hope you find these pages to be both interesting and useful in preparing for the holiday season.



A-Train Construction Set: Gamers who want to keep their strategy on the right track will be able to expand the basic *A-Train* set-up and place hills, fields, houses, water, apartments, stadiums, skyscrapers, trains and track, but it does not allow players to actually edit the trains and redraw them like *SimLife* players can edit life-forms. The add-on disk also allows players to embezzle up to $900 million in order to get their fiscal steam up faster, but does not allow players to edit the basic economic model of the original game. (Maxis, IBM, $34.95)

Aero Biz: As president and CEO of an airline company, the player chooses between one scenario (1963-1995) where the player leads his/her company through a transition in technology that we all lived through or another scenario (1983-2015) where the player leads the company to look toward the future. Although the game has the same types of investment decisions, marketing decisions, and management decisions as one would find in *Air Bucks* or *Railroad Tycoon*, having the routes limited to 22 cities provides for a more focused, but limited, game. Gamers essentially handle negotiations and set budgets on a quarterly basis, rather than running the operations where the meter is continually ticking as in *Railroad Tycoon* or *Air Bucks*. Even with those limitations, however, *AeroBiz* stands as one of the deepest strategy games we've seen on a dedicated game machine. (Koei, SNES, $74.95)



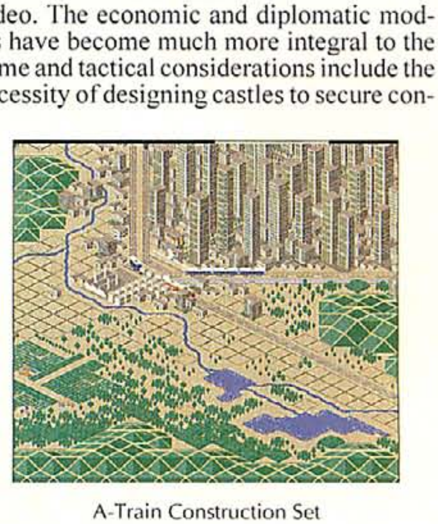
Aero Biz

Air Bucks: A multi-player (1-4) game of airline entrepreneurship, *Air Bucks* allows each gamer to found, build and operate his/her own commercial airline from the pioneering days of passenger airline service to the present. *Air Bucks* is sometimes called *Runway Tycoon* because of its similarity to *Railroad Tycoon*, but the emphasis in the airline game is on operating the best airline and customizing the operating parameters without getting into hostile takeovers and building peripheral industries. Players get landing rights, plan air routes, purchase planes, configure aircraft interiors, set fares and customer service level, maintain fleets and establish advertising strategies as they try to create and operate the number one airline in the world. (Impressions, IBM, $59.95)

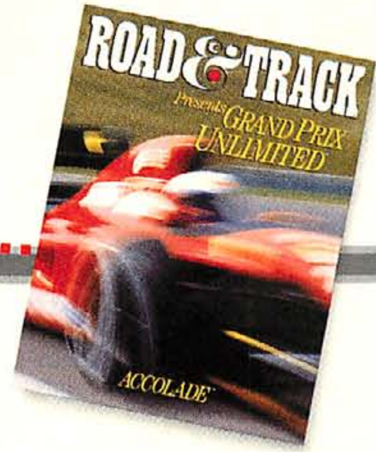
Battle Chess 4000: It probably wouldn't be a good thing to play this game with Chewbacca from *Star Wars*. He might find it amusing, for a while, to watch the 3-D rendered animation derived from clay models, but he certainly wouldn't be interested in losing to the grandmaster levels of AI which underpin the game. The animation features the same types of hilarious death scenes which were used in the original *Battle Chess*, but the setting in this latest version of the computer gamer's ultimate showcase chess set is a battle against alien conquerors. The animation sequences and beginning AI levels should please the most helpless novice, while the library of over 300,000 moves and the advanced AI levels should engage even the most proficient expert. (Interplay, IBM, $49.95)

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space: See the sneak preview on page 8 of this issue for more information on this product. (Interplay, IBM, $69.95)

Castles 2: *Castles 2* may well be the game many wargamers were looking for in the original *Castles*. Now, castle construction is a task which is better integrated into the overall strategy for running a feudal kingdom. The game has much more of an emphasis on conquest and empire building without sacrificing the storyline elements and "random events" that many gamers liked in the original Castles. Indeed, the stories have been enhanced with ambient video. The economic and diplomatic models have become much more integral to the game and tactical considerations include the necessity of designing castles to secure con-



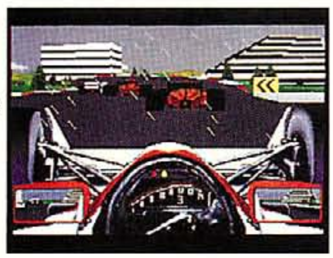
A-Train Construction Set



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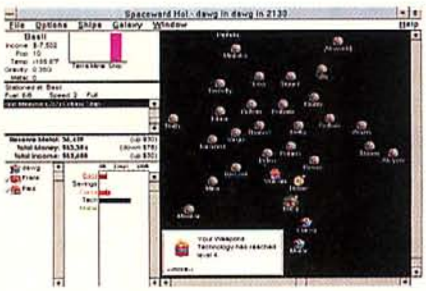
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Castles 2

trol and improve the economy of conquered territories. We also welcome the new siege and open battle systems. (Interplay, IBM, $59.95)

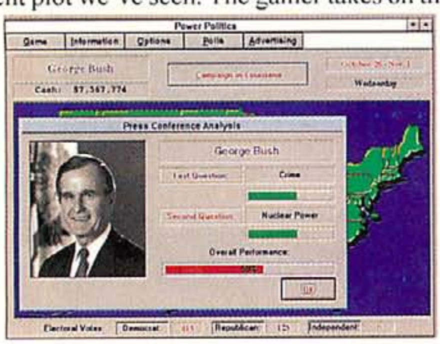
Chessmaster 3000 Multimedia Pro: In order to make the most successful chess game ever into a multimedia product, Software Toolworks elected to provide audio instruction from the fictional Chessmaster pictured on the box as well as a PRO edition which offers four hours of narration and instruction from former World Champion Anatoly Karpov. Many gamers love the option of selecting their artificial opponents from a



Spaceward Ho!

library of artificial personalities. Another popular option is the War Room feature which shows the move list and allows the gamer to observe the moves currently under consideration by the artificial opponent. (Software Toolworks, CD MPC, $99.95)

Contraptions: Gamers can expect to see several logic puzzle games in the next few months. *Contraptions* may well be the first of this new generation of logic puzzles to hit the market. It certainly has the most coherent plot we've seen. The gamer takes on the



Power Politics

role of a Repair Man and attempts to repair the entire contraption by traversing a labyrinth of rooms, filled with Rube Goldberg style machines. The gamer tries to fix all of these contraptions in order to repair the entire machine. The animation and sound should add to the entertainment value. (Software Toolworks, IBM and Amiga, $39.95)

Grand Slam Bridge 2.0: The standard bridge program from 1986 has now been upgraded in both appearance and play value. *Grand Slam Bridge 2.0* offers a mouse-driven interface, VGA graphics and sound support to its strong tutorial and challenging computer opponents. Players can now use cue bids, four and five card majors, preemptive bids and a host of specialized bidding conventions (Stayman, Gerber, Jacoby Transfers and Blackwood). In addition, gamers can type in the hands from newspaper and magazine columns in order to solve bridge problems or replay famous hands. Players can also save hands to disk (with custom annotation) or print out individual or entire hands for later replay. (Electronic Arts, IBM, $49.95)

Megalomania: Knowledge is power in the world of *Megalomania*. Players fight a series of battles in a quasi-*Powermonger* type of environment, the lone player takes on the computerized opponents in power struggles which begin at caveman era technology (sticks and stones) and rise up to nuclear weapons. Fighting over a vast number of "worlds," each of which becomes progressively more difficult, the charm of this game is undeniably imprinted in its cute graphics and animations. A real-time strategy game for persons who do not want to get mired down in lots of details and documentation, *Megalomania* is another absorbing import from the *Powermonger* school of game theory. (UbiSoft, IBM and Amiga, $49.95)

National Lampoon's ChessMeister 5 Billion And 1: Rotoscoped live-action images cavort across the chessboard in this send-up of all computer chess games. The chess sets will have a medieval fantasy-role-playing look and a bawdy medieval theme with plenty of physical and scatological humor. Imagine the king moving stately across the board and performing a pratfall a la Chevy Chase and that expresses the idea. Even the box and manual will carry out the irreverent theme. Underneath the earthy animated pranks, however, we are assured that the chess model will be competitive. (Spectrum HoloByte, IBM, $69.95)

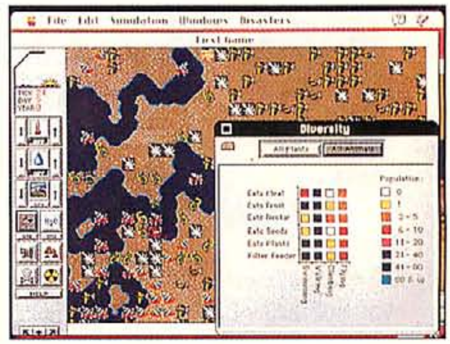
Power Politics: Donald Segretti, Richard Nixon's renounced dirty trickster from the 1972 U.S. Presidential campaign, would be proud of an election game that includes: dirty tricks, media buys, debates, fund raising, campaign appearances, random events and the ability to customize a half-dozen variables within the game. The game was already good when it was sneak previewed



Battle Chess 4000

in CGW #99, but significant design changes have been made to reflect the criticisms brought to bear in the preview. *Power Politics* is a point and click *tour de force* of presidential politics in the U.S. (Cineplay, IBM with Windows, $49.95)

Rampart: After playing *Rampart*, one wonders why the coin-op favorite ever lost its popularity. Two gamers at the same computer (or two SNES players) compete in this game of castle destruction and defense. One player bombards the castle from his war-



SimLife

ships off-shore and the other defends by trying to sink the warships and, at the end of each round, rebuild the damaged castle. The player tries to accomplish the latter in such a way that the randomly appearing *Tetris*-esque pieces of castle wall are placed to expand the castle and allow room for more cannon. (Electronic Arts, IBM and SNES, $39.95 and $49.95)

SimLife: In many ways, Maxis has become the artificial life company. *SimLife* may well be the apex of their efforts to date. The game



Rampart SNES



War Room



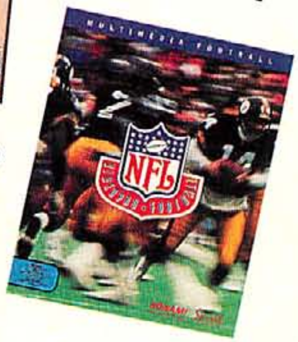


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allows players to create their own ecosystems, life-forms and mutations, all via very user-friendly sliders and definition windows. One can engender mythological creatures or create alien life-forms to invade custom ecosystems. Even though artificial life sounds very complicated, since it involves the creation of software-driven rules sets, the program helps players get their life-forms off the ground relatively painlessly, since establishing the genetic algorithms necessary to set an experiment in motion can be handled efficiently with its well-designed mouse-driven interface. (Maxis, Macintosh, $69.95)

Take-A-Break Crossword: Anyone who doubts the appeal of this product needs to look at the number of crossword magazines that hit the newstands every month or try to



Utopia

pick up an airline magazine where the crossword isn't, at least partially, filled in. *Take-A-Break Crossword* provides Windows users with 375 puzzles out of those very magazines mentioned earlier and allows puzzle solvers to try puzzles at three levels of difficulty; compete against other players by time and score; get On-Line Hints; enjoy cheese screens full of congratulatory animation sequences; and print out blank or partially completed puzzles to be completed away from the computer. (Dynamix, IBM, $49.95)

Utopia: As previewed in *CGW* #98, this strategy game requires the player as planetary administrator to develop a solid economic base, high quality of life and fend off alien threats on 10 different planets which feature a variety of climates. The graphics look remarkably similar to *Powermonger* and the economic model is something of a cross between *SimCity* and *Moonbase*. (Konami, IBM and Amiga, $49.95)

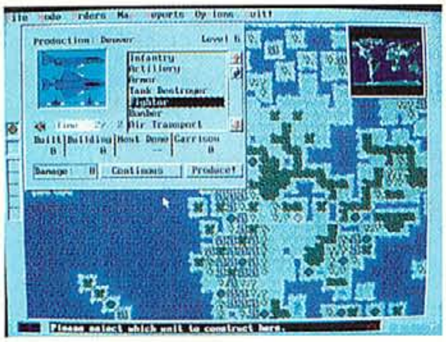
Battles of Destiny: For those who have ever wondered what a company like **QQP** could do with a game like *Empire*, here is an answer. While the similarities will be obvious, the differences are numerous and striking, including: modem play (with "easy to email" files for PBEM fans), a campaign game and a map maker. Perhaps most importantly, *Battles of Destiny*'s shining element is the diversity of unit types and their interactions. Plenty of features makes this a definite "must play" for fans of *Empire* and other games of futuristic world conquest. (QQP, IBM, $59.95)

Carriers at War Editor: This scenario creation kit features **SSG**'s latest invention (the one which caused the eight-month delay in the release of *Carriers at War*), *War Room*. Here, players can actually change or create artificial intelligence routines and "plans" for the computer opponents to use, including contingency plans! Players can create their own ships and airplanes (although they will also have to create new graphics in another program like *Deluxe Paint* to accomplish this), too. (Strategic Studies Group, IBM, no price)

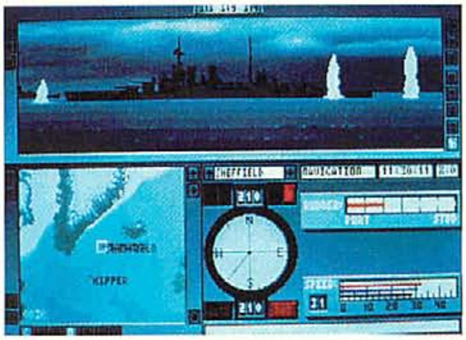
Conquered Kingdoms: A fine blend of play mechanics between *The Lost Admiral* and the *Perfect General* (with a hint of **SSG**'s *Warlords* thrown in), this strategy game puts players in the land of Cascatia (a randomly-generated map for each campaign game), a fantasy world where knights, monsters and wizards have combined to form powerful armies in an attempt to rule through conquest. The game comes with modem and PBEM features, as well as a campaign game and almost a dozen individual scenarios, to provide enough variables to keep even the most jaded wargamer intrigued for a long time to come. (QQP, IBM, $59.95)

Gary Grigsby's Pacific War: It is certainly about time that prolific wargame designer Gary Grigsby received title billing in one of his games. As implied in the title, this game is Gary's magnum opus, covering all of WWII in the Pacific Theater of Operations. It uses a modified *Second Front* system (although it has actually undergone a major overhaul) and each turn equals a week in game time. Players order forces (on an operational level) from point-to-point (base to base). In addition, economics and logistics are all factored into the combat and movement results in a detailed (but manageable) fashion. Finally, the game even includes a special PBEM feature for serious wargamers that want to campaign against real, rather than artificial, intelligence. (Strategic Simulations, Inc., IBM, $79.95)

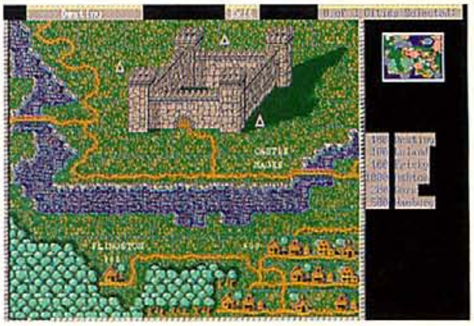
Great Naval Battles in the North Atlantic: Imagine *Silent Service II* meets *Kriegsmarine*. The truth is that *Great Naval Battles in the North Atlantic* has something of the look and feel of the former (except that all of the digitized ships are seen through binoculaurs rather than a periscope and they look more detailed than they did in the earlier game) and the strategy of the latter (except that one is continually making real-time game-time decisions rather than giving orders in distinct phases). The tactical scope of this simulation will really appeal to miniatures gamers who enjoyed the *General Quarters* rules, as well as *Jane's Fighting Ships* aficionados who will really enjoy seeing those deck diagrams come to life in full-color animation. In addition, frustrated admirals will enjoy the campaign



Battles of Destiny



Great Naval Battles



Conquered Kingdoms

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High Command Scenario Editor

option which requires logistics, strategy and dedication (one can literally play for weeks using the campaign game). (Strategic Simulations, Inc., $69.95)

High Command Scenario Editor: This scenario editor allows players to get into the formulae and data bases to create their own historical and hypothetical WWII scenarios. For every enthusiast on the subject or dedicated *High Command* fan who cannot get enough of the game or wants to be a computer game designer, this is the tool that can



V for Victory: Velikiye Luki

make it happen. While they're at it, gamers who have not upgraded to *High Command* v1.1 should get their free upgrade (available to all registered users) and enjoy the improved artificial opponent, as well as the changes to the way ships and planes destroy ground units. (Colorado Computer Creations, IBM, $24.95)

Liberty or Death!: The American Revolutionary slogan takes on new life in the latest challenge from **Koei**. Just like earlier **Koei** games, players must marshal economic, diplomatic and military forces in order to



Task Force 1942

circumvent the enemy's resource advantage and, eventually, conquer his territory. Historical purists will have difficulty suspending disbelief with some of the mechanics of this game, just as they did with *L'Empereur*, but **Koei**'s games tend to be very well play-balanced and extremely challenging, so wargamers will have to decide for themselves whether they are at liberty to purchase it or willing to let it die on the shelf. (Koei, IBM, $59.95)

Line in the Sand: Previewed on page 142 of this issue, *Line in the Sand* is faithful conversion of the **TSR** boardgame which features the 1991 Persian Gulf Conflict. (Strategic Simulations, Inc., IBM, $39.95)

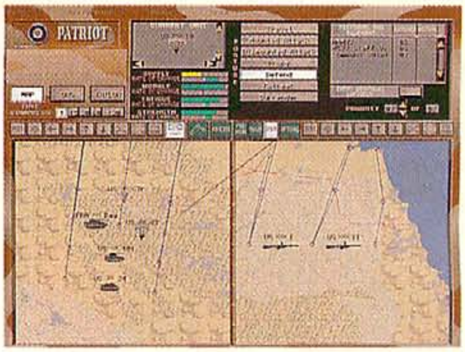
Pacific Islands: A Pacific atoll takes its toll in this casual wargame sequel to Team Yankee. See the review of Team Yankee and Pacific Islands on page 174 of this issue. (Readysoft, IBM and Amiga, $49.95)

Patriot: Named after the successful missile used during the Gulf Conflict of 1991, *Patriot* is **Three-Sixty**'s command simulation of modern land warfare. Designed by wargame experts from boardgame company GDW, the game features new innovations like variable (gamer-defined) zones of control, as well as windowed command structures that let gamers page through unit after unit in tremendous detail. (Three-Sixty Pacific, IBM, $69.95)

Siege: The Dogs of War: More fun than pouring boiling oil over one's enemies is this expansion disk for **Mindcraft**'s *Siege*. With the expansion disk, wargamers can play head-to-head over their modems, besiege six new castles, challenge 24 new scenarios, command new monsters (with new abilities) and tangle with a brand new computer opponent. (Mindcraft, IBM, $29.95)

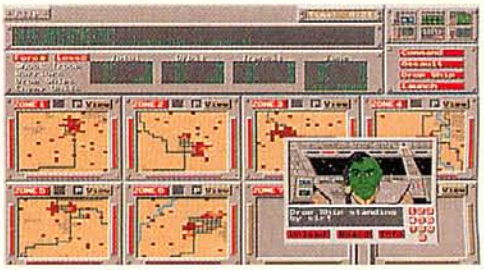
Spaceward, Ho! for Windows: If'n ya'all wanna' tame some wild planets and shoot down some 'ornery space hombres, this cute cowboys-in-space game of strategic conquest is what ya'all been hankerin' fer. MS-DOS gamers will find it convenient to think of this game as *Reach for the Stars* with a humorous cowboy theme and Mac-like interface. Macintosh gamers have probably already heard about this relatively obscure (by DOS standards), but exciting multi-player game. Both the old Macintosh game (sold by independent Mac publisher, *Delta Tau*) and the new Windows version support network play, same console multi-player games (hot seated) and solitaire play against several computer opponents. (New World, IBM with Windows, $59.95)

Star Legions: Once upon a time in a galaxy far too similar to ours, there was a popular sequel to a best-selling game. The best-selling game featured starship-to-starship combat in outer space and the sequel was supposed to allow captains of those very same starships to be able to conquer planets



Patriot

with surface invasions. Unfortunately, gamers who played the sequel never seemed to be able to reach the point in the program where those surface battles could take place. In *Star Legions*, the unattainable is now attainable. The planetary invasions are not only accessible in this game, they are the heart and soul of this game. Further, experienced gamers can torque up the competition until they reach a level they're comfortable (or uncomfortable) with. (Mindcraft, IBM, $59.95)



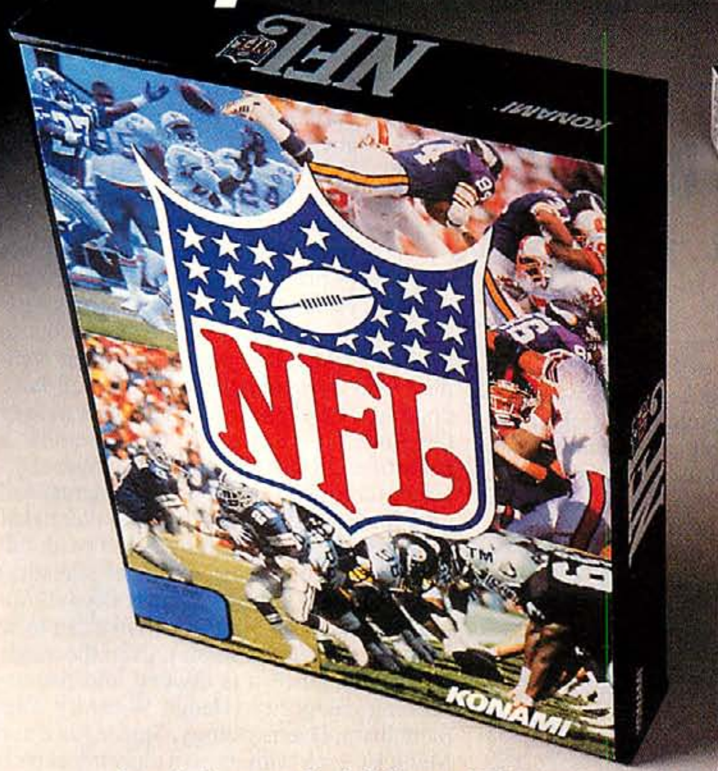
Star Legions

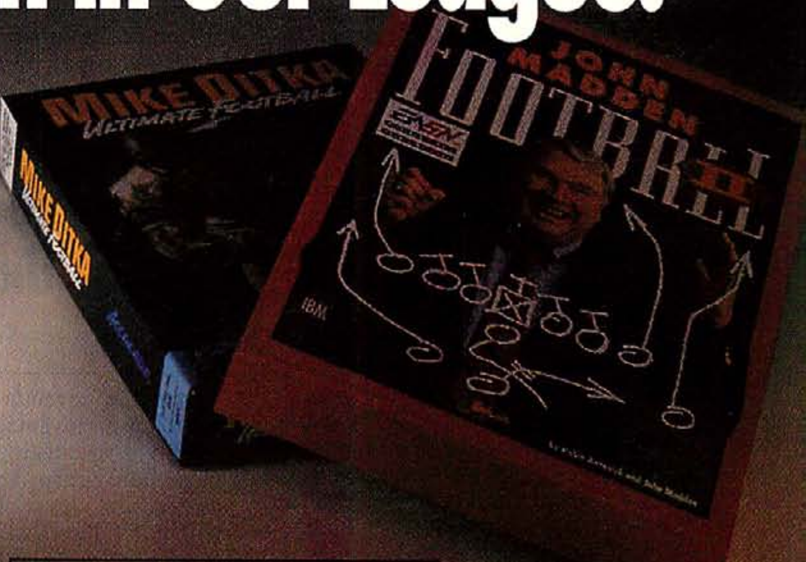
Task Force 1942: Not only were the naval battles in the Pacific Theater a different ball of wax than those in the North Atlantic (primarily due to the use of air power), but **MicroProse** has elected to take a different approach with this game (and its expected sequel) than **SSI** took in *Great Naval Battles in the North Atlantic*. Where the latter uses digitized images, the former will move ships faster via polygon-filled technology. We are assured that ships will not look as detailed as the on-screen miniatures of *GNBNA*, but are told that the ships will perform more realistically. In addition,



Grigsby's Pacific Wars

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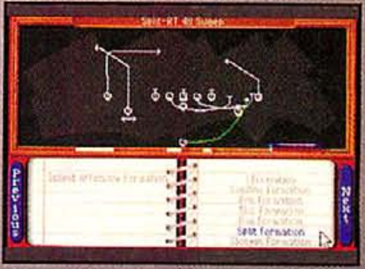
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players will have to contend with lots more variables in terms of realistic weather than players of the North Atlantic game. *Task Force 1942* will focus on the campaign for Guadalcanal. (MicroProse, IBM, $69.95)

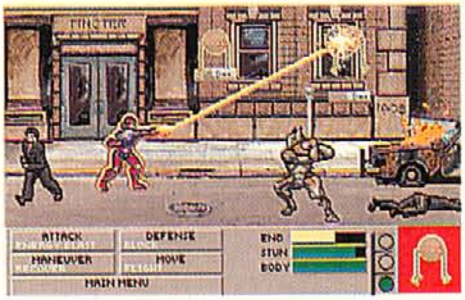
V for Victory: Utah Beach: Believed by many Macintosh owners to have been the best wargame in 1992, *V is for Victory: Utah Beach* is finally available for MS-DOS gamers. See the *CGW* article on the Macintosh version of the game for more details (#94, p. 86). (Three-Sixty Pacific, IBM and Macintosh, $69.95)

V for Victory: Velikiye Luki: Using the acclaimed *V is for Victory* system, the latest release will allow wargamers to command either side during the classic Eastern Front battle that raged from the winter of 1942 through the winter of 1943 between Leningrad and Moscow. This is not an expansion disk, but a completely new game with an artificial opponent expressly designed for the problems to be encountered during this historical conflict. (Three-Sixty Pacific, IBM and Macintosh, $69.95)



Challenge of the Five Realms: Based on an original story by *Traveller* (the people and paper role-playing system) creator Marc Miller, *Challenge of the Five Realms* is a CRPG where the player's character is confronted by a menace from another dimension and must defend his homeland by, essentially, drawing together the five realms of the game's title. Since one discovers even before the cinematic introduction of the game that the five realms were once one realm, the challenge is to create a character (warrior, wizard, diplomat or thief) via the game's clever personality quiz character generator that will be able to bring together diverse kingdoms. New features include: the ability to customize the look of one's character (using the game's paint program, importing scanned photographs or selecting from default faces); option to choose from three different styles of combat (quick, descriptive or interactive); and the PAL option which allows members of the party to act as distinct computer-controlled personalities. (MicroPlay, IBM, $59.95)

Champions: Fighting breathlessly against the dreaded Beta Plague, a fiendish supervillain that has caused this much anticipated game to be much delayed, the superhero design team at **Hero Software** may have to hire **Marvel Comics**' *Damage Control*, the famous team of insurance adjusters and crisis managers, in order to handle gamer complaints in case they don't ship this Christmas. The game has everything serious comic fans could want from a spreadsheet style character generator that makes creating characters a breeze and an easy-to-use editor for creating that essential hero look to the promise of future add-on adventures so that one's character can live beyond the adventures in the boxed set. Character disadvantages, villains with personality, a fascinating method of character interaction, crisp animated combat sequences and clever plots make the game a delight for those who have always wondered what it would be like to be a superhero. (Hero Software, IBM, $59.95)



Champions



Gem Fire

Crusaders of the Dark Savant: David Bradley's merger of fantasy and science-fiction (begun in *Bane of the Cosmic Forge*) continues in the seventh installment in the famous *Wizardry* series. *Bane* players will be able to start the game from any one of the three possible endings to that episode and new players have a special starting position for novices. As Bradley continues to massage the role-playing system, skills are becoming more and more important for the party (swimming in particular for some of the dungeons in the game). Further, the reputation of the party among different races can affect the type and quality of information received and the likelihood of an alliance between the party and other NPCs. We also think that the experience of having the player's party competing against computer-controlled parties should be extremely interesting. Computer gamers will also appreciate the fact that *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* uses a maximum of 6.5 MB (including all saved games) on the hard drive. (Sir-Tech, IBM, $79.95)

Daemonsgate: "Party of eight, daemon bait, your CRPG is ready!" We can almost hear the maitre d' of game designers calling out such a challenge for any gamers who are willing to brave the continent of Hestor, a land mass equivalent to 3,000 computer screens which has, in turn, seven cities which zoom out to provide another 10,000 screens each for the gamer's party to explore. The design team set out to create the largest and most complex CRPG ever and they may well have done so. The player, as Captain Gustavus of the Imperial Tormishan, can assemble a party of eight from 32 potential player characters (complete with physical, mental and emotional statistics) and has the potential of running into 128 migrating NPCs (with full physical, mental and emotional statistics) and about 400 citizens in each city (all following a daily timeline, much like that to be found in the *Ultima* series). Even the magic is detailed, since it is divided into five ascending categories (Hedge Wizardry, Elementalism, Daemonology, Spiritualism and Magick), each with its own alchemical recipes and rituals. Finally, everything the party does, including combat, is affected by the personalities of the characters. (Gametek, IBM, $79.95)

Gemfire: When the Kingdom of Ishmeria was being terrorized by a fire dragon, a battle ensued in which several magical beings were transmogrified into cold gems. The King of Ishmeria set the seven stones into a crown which he called Gemfire. Naturally, the crown possessed magical powers equivalent to those beings and all was well as long as the king was a good king. Then, King Eselred entered the picture and a war ensued in which the stones were separated from the crown. Now that Eselred is dead, it is the player's job to restore those stones to the crown and (does this sound familiar?)

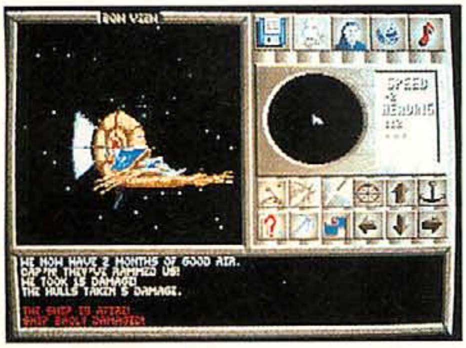


Daemonsgate



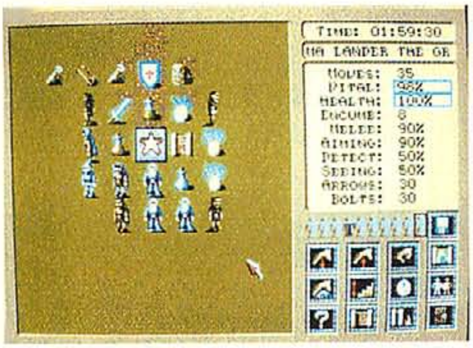
Clouds of Xeen

reunite the kingdom. This is done in typical **Koei** fashion using a menu-driven icon-based interface. There are fewer options than in most **Koei** games, but the icons (derived from the cartridge versions of the game) are not very intuitive and take some getting used to. Fortunately, it looks like a good introduction to the special type of role-playing to be found in these games. (Koei, IBM, $49.95)



Spelljammer: Pirates of Realmspace

Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen: Using the same basic point and click icon-based CRPG engine as *Might & Magic III, Clouds of Xeen* introduces a fascinating new villain in the evil Lord Xeen. It also uses animated full-screen characters and digitized speech to provide more cinematic transitions and enhance the pacing of the game. In perhaps, one of the boldest design concepts in CRPGs to date, Jon van Caneghem conceived Xeen as a two-tiered world: the world of brightness to be found in *Clouds* and the world of darkness to be found in the sequel. Gamers who have both *Clouds* and its upcoming sequel on their hard drives will find that they can, not only, travel between



Paladin 2

the worlds of both games, but will find that they have different strengths and weaknesses in each game world and that there is yet another quest (almost half the size of *Clouds*) to reward them for their success. (New World, IBM, $69.95)

Paladin 2: "Have Sword Will Travel" should be emblazoned on the hilt of the player character in this tactical-combat level role-playing game. The player takes on the role of Brandon, a young would-be paladin who must succeed in 20 pre-built scenarios to prove himself and win his knighthood. Similar to *Breach,* players command a band that must fight over a variety of terrain and against a wide spectrum of villains in a fantasy environment. Every activity in the game from spell-casting and movement to combat is handled via an easy point and click interface. Finally, one of the most popular features of most of the games developed by **Omnitrend** (whether published by **Omnitrend, Mindcraft** or **Impressions**) is the scenario builder. In *Paladin 2*, the scenario builder looks like the easiest to use ever. (Impressions, IBM, $59.95)

Spellcraft: Aspects of Valor: Wizards, warlocks and witches take note. This role-playing/action gaming hybrid offers the most extensive magic system we've ever seen in a game. 56 ingredients combine in an unlimited number of combinations to create 100 spells of varying effect and quality. Magic users will hop back and forth between planes of existance as they seek out ingredients and spell recipies in both the real world and in the planes of an alternate dimension. With the proper supplies, players enter their workshop to experiment with their ingredients, searching for the combinations that generate the most powerful spell. Then, with spellbook in hand, they venture forth into realms teaming with nasties and battling with them in real-time. Of course, the 50+ hours of game time all leads up to a battle with the Ultimate Evil Wizard Dude. (ASCIIware, IBM, $59.95)

Spelljammer: Pirates of Realmspace: Take the atmospheric sailing vessels of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *John Carter of Mars* complete with its romantic view of age of sail style combat, add the capacity to sail through space and mix it well with the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* system and universe. That is the recipe for the *Spelljammer* series. **SSI**'s first foray into the *Spelljammer* universe is *Pirates of Realmspace*, an adventure where the player's character commands a mercenary crew of 12 and travels from planet to planet in search of the slave base where the evil Neogi keep their human cargo. Naturally, the character will face lesser pirate ships, potential mutiny from his/her own crew and alien monsters (who attack in analogous manners to the traditional AD&D bestiaries) along the way. Then, once the Neogi's slave base is found, it is the player's job to destroy the flagship of these space pirates,



Spellcraft

attain his official appointment as Captain and get ready for the next adventure. (Strategic Simulations, Inc., IBM, $59.95)

The Summoning: A 3-D, isometric dungeon romp for a single character. For more information, see the Taking A Peek column in this issue. (SSI, IBM, $59.95)

Waxworks: Anyone who touches the ex-



Waxworks

hibits in Uncle Boris' very special wax museum will find themselves transported into the historical era being depicted. This, of course, can be very disconcerting when one finds oneself trapped in an Egyptian tomb, for instance. This game, developed by **HorrorSoft** for **Accolade**, uses the basic *Elvira II* engine, except it has gone back to gross hit points rather than using the *Runequest* style of discreet hit points for each limb or section of the anatomy. The player takes on the role of a loyal nephew who has to solve the mystery of why his Uncle Boris' body is missing from the grave. A diabolical twin, Gypsy magic and macabre time travel add to the mix. (Accolade, IBM, $59.95)



Crusaders of the Dark Savant


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Your fate is decided when you fall in battle— you become a prisoner of the Temptress and her evil Skorl warriors.
In the world of Virtual Theatre, other characters take on a life of their own. You never know what may happen...
Slowly, you open your eyes in the dim light and begin to take in your surroundings. The rough stone walls... the filthy straw mattress under a flickering, smoky torch... the barred window and massive oak door. Obviously, this isn't the guest suite. The peaceful land of Turnvale has been seized by the enchantress Selena... and so, it seems, have you. Enter the world of Virtual Theatre™, an innovative new graphic adventure system where fantasy becomes reality and characters take on a life of their own. You assume the role of Diermot, an unlikely hero caught up in a web of sorcery and intrigue. Match your wits against the cruel Temptress and her monstrous creatures, the savage Skorl. Just who is this mysterious Selena— and what is she after? The answer to these questions lie hidden in Lure of the Temptress.
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vt virtual theatre
REVOLUTION
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Circle Reader Service #93

Amazon - Guardians of Eden: As previewed in issue #98, this campy adventure takes the episodal adventures of early TV and the Saturday afternoon movie serials as its inspiration in creating a story built of self-contained scenarios that end with "spine-tingling" cliff-hangers. As in previous Access adventures, *Amazon* makes extensive



Amazon - Guardians of Eden

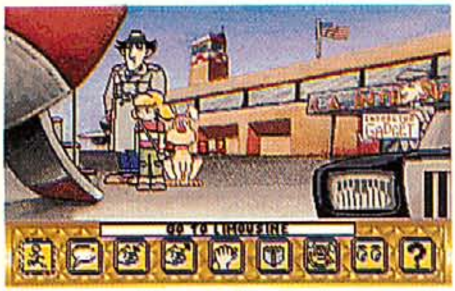
use of digitized images for its backgrounds, digitized video footage of live actors for its characters, and a speech track in addition to a nice jungle-rhythms score. The story is, of course, set in the lush South American jungles and can easily be compared to a "B"



Kings Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow

Romancing The Stone. The puzzles are very involved and some are real-time, but frustrated adventures can access the tiered on-line hints to help them along. (Access, IBM, $69.95)

The Adventures of Willy Beamish CD-ROM: The exuberant animated adventure becomes even more like a truly interactive cartoon in the CD-ROM version of the game. Now, gamers can toggle off the written dialogue and *listen* to the story unfold,



Inspector Gadget

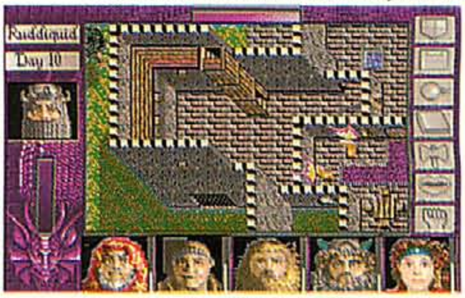


as well as watching it, whenever puzzles are solved and choices are made. The well-casted voice talent certainly adds a new dimension to the gaming experience. (Dynamix, IBM and Sega CD-ROM, $69.95)

Inspector Gadget: Go, go gadget adventurers! The fiendish Dr. Claw and his M.A.D. minions have made accelerating the pollution of the earth into their numer one priority. Naturally, it is up to young sleuths (ages 8-14) to put an end to his schemes. Players will trot around the globe looking for clues and using inductive skills while tracking down the baddies. The design team has worked closely with animation studio DIC and is using digitized images from the cartoon series as the on-screen characters. The game is simple enough to serve as a great introduction to interactive adventures for both children and those adults who enjoy the humor because they think of Gadget as a cross between Maxwell Smart and Doc Brown from *Back to the Future*. (Azeroth, IBM, Mac, $59.95)

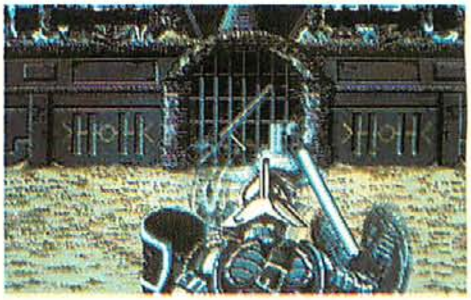
King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow: In the latest and most lavish adventure in **Sierra**'s flagship series, young Prince Alexander is in search of Cassima, his love, whom he must find before she marries the evil Vizier of the Land of the Green Isles (aka Fantasy Plot #2). Its book of techno-wizardry lists an opening sequence featuring 3-D animation rendered by Chronos (the special effects team behind *Lawnmower Man* and *Batman Returns*) and a soundtrack featuring a new love ballad, expected to be promoted as a single on Top 40 radio. The design team has refined **Sierra**'s work with rotoscoping and scanning background scenes from other art media. The result is exceptional. In addition to the flash, this quest appears as if it will have the most challenge of any of the more recent *King's Quest* games, with multiple endings and more than the average complement of interesting puzzles. (Sierra, IBM, $79.95)

The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes: Gamers who would know to look for Mycroft Holmes at the Diogenes Club should enjoy the flavor of **Electronic Arts**' first foray into the graphic adventure category, *The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes*. The adventure features a rich use of Holmes trivia and attempts to reward the gamer for keeping the game afoot in true Sherlock fashion. When one is stuck, one turns to one's smarter brother and receives clues. There is a penalty involved in seeking such clues, but the clues are layered (a la Elvira's acid-laced hints in *Elvira II*) and do not give the game away. Travel is handled via a delightful map of the London of the 1890s that functions similar to the map in *Rise of the Dragon*. Interior locales are handled via a modified SCUMM-style interface (instead of the icon-based menus of the present



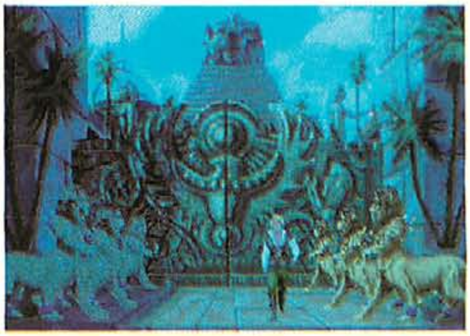
Challenge of the 5 Realms

LucasArts products, **EA** has opted for the original one word commands, placed on wooden drawers). Finally, the game uses a journal as a device for auto-notetaking a la *The Magic Candle* to make it easy for gamers to keep track of "the story so far." All in all, the Jack the Ripper-style mystery looks like an intriguing entry into the genre. (Electronic Arts, IBM, $69.95)



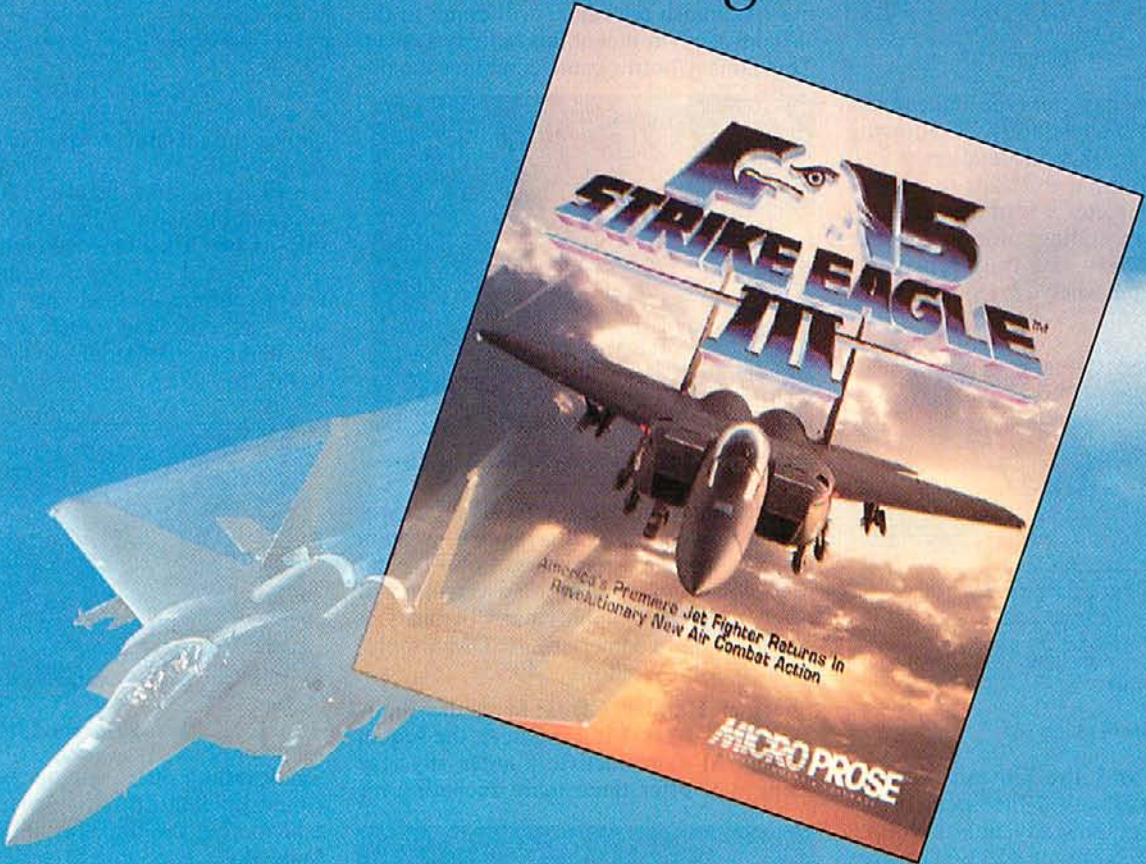
Koshan Conspiracy

Quest For Glory III: The Wages of War: The dark spectre of war hovers over the land of Tarna, a world visually inspired by ancient Egyptian and deep African civilizations, and guess who must step in to stop it. One can either import his or her character from previous Quests or begin anew as a thief, magic user or fighter. The combat system has been enhanced to offer unique



Quest for Glory III

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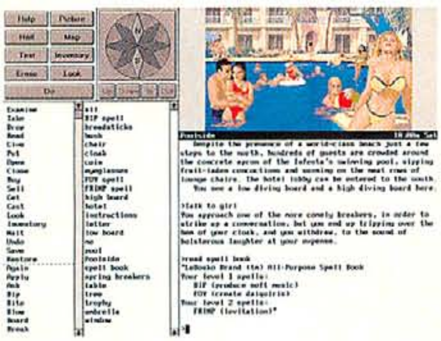
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Circle Reader Service #106



The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes

options for each character type and conversations have an interesting twist, allowing the player to give NPCs information as well as receive it. Multiple solutions to puzzles based upon a character's attributes and several different story endings promise to make this one of the very few truly replayable adventures on the shelves. (Sierra, IBM, $69.95)

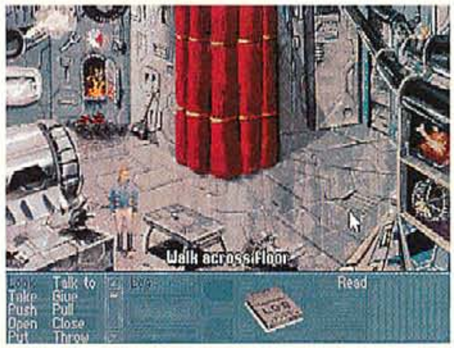


Spellcasting 301

Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Benders: MicroProse's first launch into the universe of graphic adventures will put players into the boots of space stud, Rex Nebular. Originally scripted by Steve Meretzky (see *Spellcasting 301* below) and fleshed out by a stand up comic/script writer, this promises to be a bawdy romp in its Naughy mode and a goofy, though still suggestive, game when played on the Nice setting. It will feature rotoscoped animation, hand-painted backgrounds, sprite scaling motion, digitized speech and other gee-whiz flash that will ensure its competitveness in the graphic adventure arena. (MicroProse, IBM, $69.95)

The Seventh Guest: Virgin's long-awaited multi-media gothic horror story should finally make it to the CD-ROM owner's home this holiday season. The game is set in a haunted mansion rendered in 3-D Studio and features an unheard of *two compact disks* full of gory animations. We've seen the sights and the incredible sounds but we've yet to see a playable game, so the details of its gameplay will have to remain a mystery. What we do know is that this product will be *the* showpiece item on this year's list of CD-ROM titles. (Virgin, IBM CD-ROM, $99.99)

Shadowgate For Windows: The best-selling Macintosh adventure will come to the Windows environment this holiday season. This fantasy/horror game combines the ob-



Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Benders

ject-oriented puzzles typical of early graphic adventures with a combat, weapon and armor system reminiscent of a typical role-playing game. The new version will offer fresh '90s graphics and, obviously, a slightly modified interface. (ICOM Simulations, IBM w/Windows, $49.95)

Sherlock Holmes, CD II: In another digitized visit to 221B Baker Street, the sequel to **ICOM**'s interactive murder mystery game will offer three more scenarios for



Seventh Guest

sleuths to solve. As in the original, this game is composed of 90 minutes of digitized, quarter-screen video running near 15-frames-per second. The player wades through these well-acted video clips, gathering clues to build a case, and bringing the case before a judge who gives a multiple



Shadowgate for Windows

choice quiz. Gamers who have played the people and paper game, *221B Baker Street*, are likely to find themselves feeling very comfortable with the game mechanics in this game. This new version adds some much needed features — fast-forward and rewind buttons — that make fact gathering and fact checking much easier. (ICOM Simulations, IBM CD-ROM, Mac CD-ROM, $69.95)



Sherlock Holmes, CD II

Spellcasting 301: Spring Break: Some would say that Ernie Eaglebeak never gets a break, but the third installment of Steve Meretzky's sophomoric series will prove them wrong. *Spring Break* will find Ernie packing up his spell book, loading up the cooler, and heading to the beaches of Fort Naughtytail. One can be certain that Meretsky's campy wit will slash out at everything associated with the average collegian's yearly migration to the coasts and one can be even more certain that it will all be covered with gratuitous flesh galore. Indeed, there's a slice of digitized cheesecake to head off every chapter. As per the **Legend** style, *Spring Break* will offer more than the average number of tough puzzles and several graphic conundrums. (Legend, IBM, $59.95)

The Ancient Art of War in the Skies: Though designed in the spirit of the *Ancient Art of War* line, this is definitely the most action-intensive game in the series. Players direct bombers and fighters in the air war over the battlefields of the first world war. As players make successful bomber attacks on critical enemy structures and lines, the war on the ground will reflect their efforts. Dogfights are hot and fast action sequences resembling those in *Wings of Fury* and bomber sequences are exercises in strategy and timing, viewed from the bomb bay window. As in the previous









Frigid winter winds swept over an already chilled **Gotham City**. Random street crimes were running at an all-time high, despite the holidays. Down below, in the city's frozen sewers, **Oswald Cobblepot**, known as **The Penguin**, planned *more* mayhem and schemed the takeover of the frightened metropolis. **Gotham City** *is* in trouble. A desperate call to **Batman** goes up.

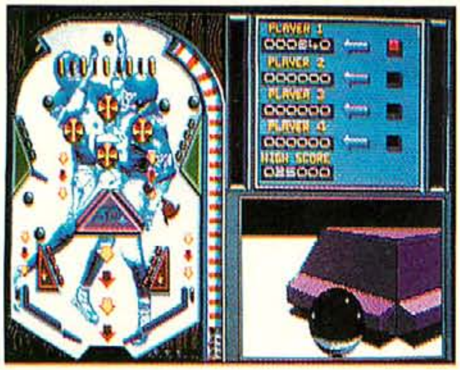
Partner with **Batman** to salvage **Gotham City** from **The Penguin's** cold-hearted plot. Guide him in swift, life-like moves from dark alleys to rooftops in vivid scenes straight from the hit movie, "**Batman Returns**." Control his combat style, and help conduct relentless interrogations of **The Penguin's** gang. Use the **Batcave** computer to input clues, analyze evidence, and review enemy bios. You're in charge of weapons and utilities, too. Save **Gotham City**... and put **The Penguin** on ice.





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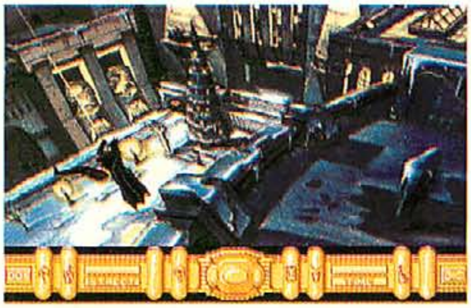
Circle Reader Service #94



3-D Pinball

AAW games, *Skies* offers dozens of scenarios to challenge and a scenario editor allowing one to create one's own madness. (MicroProse, IBM, $59.95)

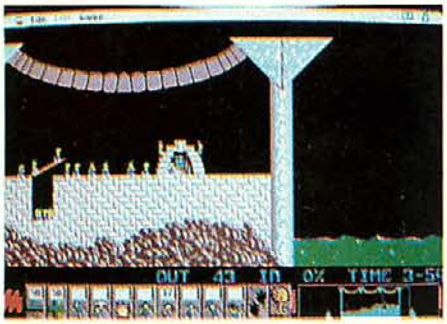
Batman Returns: Using digitized sets from the lavish Tim Burton film, but not the likenesses of the acting talents or the plot from the popular film, the player maneuvers Batman through the crime venues of the Gotham City underworld. Batman does have to battle the Penguin, Catwoman and



Batman Returns

Red Triangle Circus Gang, but the resemblances between game and film end there. Having the digitized sets is extremely appropriate, however, because the concept of this game is putting the player in the role of director in choosing how Batman reacts to the situations in between the swinging, sliding, leaping and combat sequences. (Konami, IBM, $49.95)

Battletoads: If one hasn't played the Nintendo version of this European action hit, here is the opportunity to control a militant reptile in his bid to rid the universe of the



Lemmings Macintosh

Dark Queen and her renegade space troops. Princess Angelica and the player's pal Pimple have been kidnapped and only a running-jumping-scrolling attack on the dark hordes will bring them home. (Software Toolworks, Amiga, IBM, $39.95)

Creepers: A spiritual descendent of *Lemmings*, this strategy/action puzzler challenges players to try to save little inchworms by altering the terrain over which they creep or by moving them along with various objects (fans, tennis racquets, trampolines, etc.), eventually bringing them to the end of the level where they turn into butterflies. How sweet! (Psygnosis, Amiga, IBM, $49.99)

Dragon's Lair 3: Don Bluth's daffy hero, Dirk Daring, continues his exploits beyond the laser-disk in this third series of animated action-puzzles. Daphne, the perennial damsel-in-distress, has been accosted by the Mordread the evil witch and Dirk must dust off his trusty two-handed sword and wade into the sea of animated adventure. The gamer knows what to expect — more ingenious animation and yet even more hilarious ways for Dirk to be squashed, shocked, impaled, immolated, pounded and pulverized. (ReadySoft, Amiga, IBM, Mac, Atari ST, $59.95)

Introducing The Humans: Silliness abounds in this action/strategy puzzler inspired by *Lemmings*. The setting is a prehistoric, volcanic landscape populated with dinosaurs and a goofy new race of beings called — the humans. The humans live in a hostile world, but they are not defenseless. They have an opposable thumb (the dinosaurs laugh!), a moderately complex brain (that they are all too proud of), and each other. Survival requires that the humans use their modest collection of skills in cooperation. Spear chucking, pole-vaulting, torch wielding, rope climbing, wheel riding and the magic of the witch doctor must all be used in combination to get the humans safely through another day. Their human, all too human, antics are as endearing as a lemming's any day. (GameTek, IBM, $39.95)

Lemmings: Who knows how many green headed furries will lose their lives after Macintosh owners get hold of this conversion of a much loved hit? Climbers, diggers, miners, builders, even suicidal spontaneous combusters will serve the player as he or she assigns the *Lemmings* their one small part in a larger (dare we say giant?) strategy that may save their little souls. Over 100 fiendish levels of obstacles, traps and tricks will challenge the Lemming commander. This is a truly original action/strategy game that has spawned a new gaming genre and is a natural for the Mac. (Psygnosis, Mac, $59.99)

Lemmings II - The Tribes: Oh, no! Yet even more and more *Lemmings*! This sequel to the all-too-cute action/strategy classic will be even more cute and more challenging. Through the trials and tribulations of their efforts in the first 200+ levels that comprise the original and its add-on *Oh, No! More Lemmings!*, the Lemmings have found their homeland — Lemmingland. Fortunately, through the course of natural selection, they have begun to speciate and differentiate into tribes with special skills. Thus, not only will the Lemmings climb, dig, build, and explode as in the original, but there are now: the Beach Lemmings that love to surf; the Sport Lemming that run and leap like pudgy, green headed Carl Lewis clones; the Polar Lemmings that ski; and the Circus Lemmings that have a penchant for



Ancient Art of War in the Skies



Dragon's Lair 3

balloons. Players wil need an overall strategy for the game, as they must save enough of each tribe to face the final challenge requiring all their skills combined. (Psygnosis, IBM, $59.95)

Shadow of the Beast III: Intense action and incredible graphics may find their way un-



Introducing the Humans

Before you play Special Forces, you'd better put on your game face.



When your drop-point is smack in the middle of fierce enemy forces, you'd better dress for the occasion.

That's why, in *Special Forces*, you're equipped with high-powered rockets. Rapid-fire pistols. Rifles. Grenades. And whatever it takes to secure your objective quickly.



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Shadow of the Beast III

der the tree of the Amiga owner this holiday season. Players battle a relentless onslaught of baddies as they parallax scroll their way through many levels of puzzles on their way to "the ultimate challenge." A pumpin' musical score accompanies players the whole way through the game. (Psygnosis, Amiga, $59.99)

Star Control II: Taking the original *Star Control* combat system and immersing it in a vast galaxy of exploration, alien communication and adventure (modeled after the zany aliens in the *Starflight* series), *Star Control 2* creates a gaming hybrid that may please both the joystick jock and the adventure gamer. Players battle the Ur-quan threat by scouring the galaxy for mineral resources, building ship components to add to their mother-ship, uniting alien races against the common enemy and battling enemy



Spear of Destiny

ships in the intense combat system. The sights and sounds are quite stunning; the game uses a refined fractal planet generator similar to that used in the *Star Flight* series, uses hand-painted images to depict the alien races, and has a strong musical score. (Accolade, IBM, $59.95)

Terminator 2029: When Dark Horse Comics does a graphic novelization, each page is crammed with exhaustive detail, particularly when the subject matter involves a dark future with cyberpunk edges where technology has gone awry or violent aliens from an inhuman society present a horrendous threat. So, when **Bethesda Softworks** op-



Terminator 2029

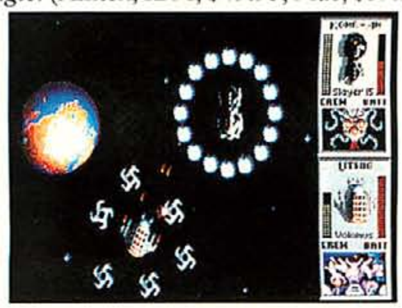
tioned Terminator 2029 from the comic publisher, it is no wonder that they created an impressive dark blue palette in finely detailed VGA graphics with plenty of pyrotechnic special effects to convey the hard-hitting fast-paced violence of that epic. The perspective is first-person; the scrolling is fast; the tactics and strategy are as reminiscent of a simulation as of an action game; and the story is tied closely to the universe of the Terminator films. Colonel John Connor assigns the player to perform the first operational field test of a new prototype A.C.E. (Advanced Cybergenetic Exoskeleton) Assault Armor. The whole feel of the game is something like *MechWarrior* meets *Terminator*, except that the graphics are much more lavish than the former's polygon-filled graphics and the latter's combination EGA/VGA pastiche. (Bethesda, IBM, $69.95)



Tristan Pinball

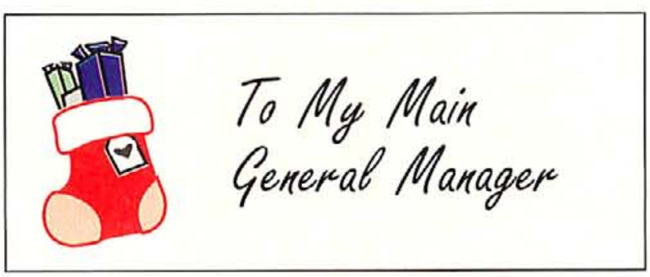
3-D Pinball: This is one of a dozen or so products that *Villa Crespo* has added to their *Coffee Break Series*. While it doesn't have as strong of a physical model as *Tristan* (described below), it does offer a variety of machines to play, and it's cheap! (Villa Crespo, IBM, $12.95)

Tristan Pinball: This excellent bumper-buster has plungeed into the MS-DOS world, to the delight of pinball wizards everywhere. The ball action is quite realistic and players may find themselves bumping their groins into their computer desks — to no avail (they'll have better luck jostlin' the machine with the space bar). The product only features one pinball machine but players will get plenty of coffee break action while waiting for the promised *8-Ball Deluxe* first quarter 1993. This is definitely the best pinball game since *David's Midnight Magic*. (Amtex, IBM, $49.95, Mac, $59.95)



Star Control II

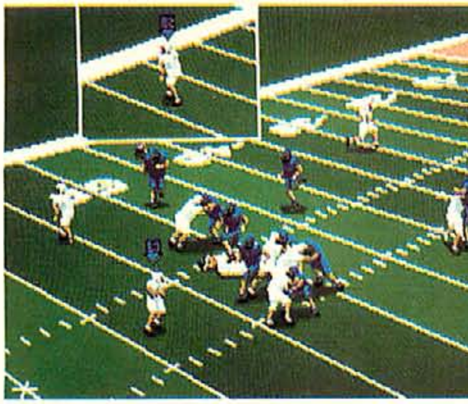
David Leadbetter's Greens: As tough as it is to compete with the look of and ease of play in *Links 386 Pro* or the customizability and connectivity in *Jack Nicklaus Golf: Signature Edition* (the connectivity, of course, with the *Prodigy Network Golf Tour*), **MicroProse** has actually found a new angle with which to approach golf games. In *David Leadbetter's Greens*, the design team has taken the "teaching" approach. David Leadbetter, a pro who teaches many of the pros, follows the player about the course and offers timely advice. In addition, the game features a full handicapping system and approximately 12 different ways to keep score



(including a realistic tournament option for up to four human players). We particularly like the hole-by-hole analysis of each player's performance in both statistics and graphics. (MicroProse, IBM and Amiga, $59.95)

Front Page Sports Football: The war on the gridiron almost becomes a flight simulator in this 3-Space style game from **Dynamix**. All the players have been modeled and rotoscoped in 3-D and the game uses over 8,000 frames of animation to simulate the action. *Front Page Sports Football* is a game that tries to appeal to both statistics-based and arcade-oriented fans. Unlike most games which try to reach this artistic middle ground, *FPSF* allows players to create on-going (career) leagues in several different configurations, rather than just being able to play one season (a la *TV Sports Football*). In such leagues, new players become available for drafting and older players decide to retire. Stat-oriented gamers will follow their players via 350


STEVE MERETZKY'S
SPELLCASTING 301
VGA 256-COLOR
SPRING BREAK™
Follow the sun and the scent of coconut oil straight to Fort Naughtytail where Ernie Eaglebeak parties hardy with his fraternity pals in this high energy seaside romp. Ernie is hoping to find sand in all the wrong places, but ends up battling a rival fraternity from back home in a series of zany beach contests complete with gorgeous babes, wet T-shirts, mud wrestling and body surfing.
Ernie must use his wits and a healthy dose of magic to save the honor of his fraternity. There's a lot to do, and the Ft. Naughtytail Police Dept. is desperately trying to keep everyone from doing it!
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VESA compatible Super VGA support.
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...or enjoy the finest in evening entertainment.
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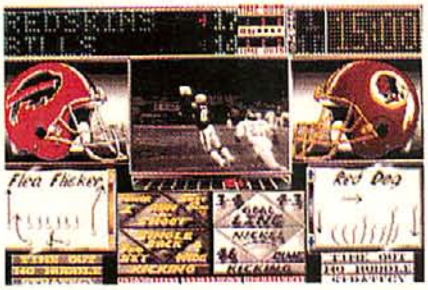


Front Page Football

statistical categories. They can even simulate game play and let the computer resolve the games, if they want. More hands-on would-be coaches can modify the 200 stock plays in the library or build them from scratch as in *John Madden II*. Further, the replay editor offers *Stunt Island*-style possibilities of recording action from nine different angles and assembling highlight films from every game. (Dynamix, IBM, $69.95)

Hockey League Simulator II: The original *Hockey League Simulator*, a product designed to complement the original *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* by providing a means for creating one's own league and customizing teams, was a relatively simple text-based product with no artificial intelligence. It simply kept track of what the gamer did and did quick calculations to resolve the games which the gamer did not want to play and offered a cute little budget/attendance model to provide a mini-game for *Gretzky* players. In its current configuration, the design team has introduced a tough AI to trade against, lots of user-defined options on how to get results (including integrating *HLS II* with *Gretzky 3*), a much stiffer budget model and the capacity to get league results almost instantly. In fact, the new product is so beefed-up that we can imagine a lot of "Rotisserie Hockey" and "Hockey Pool" players using this game as much or more than they use the remake of the classic. (Bethesda, IBM, $44.95)

John Madden Football II: The remake of a classic, *John Madden Football II* is compared and contrasted with *NFL Pro Football* starting on page 44 of this issue. (Electronic Arts, IBM, $49.95).



NFL Video Pro

MicroLeague Baseball 4.0: Along with digitized footage from actual major league games, *MicroLeague Baseball 4.0* has another technological surprise: the capacity to download updated statistics on a weekly basis from the *USA Today Sports Center*. The game itself features accessories for creating one's own league and the company supports each product with a wide range of franchise history disks (with ten great teams from each major league franchise), GM/Owner disks to allow customized teams, season disks, all star disks, World Series disks and stadium disks, as well as products to help with player analysis and fantasy rotisserie teams. In short, this is a thinking fan's product with a heavy emphasis on strategy and statistics. (MicroLeague, IBM, $49.95)

MicroLeague Football 2: Statistics-oriented football fans who have always wanted to see how they would perform as both coach and general manager of their favorite NFL team will get their chance in MicroLeague Football 2. Beyond being able to make the kinds of coaching decisions to be found in their fascinating MicroLeague Football 1.5: The Coach's Challenge Deluxe, MLF2 allows gamers to customize their leagues and teams, including a college draft. By providing a college disk with the program, would-be GMs can test their drafting ability against that of their hometown GM. Plus, the look of the game has been enhanced with digitized film footage, more statistical categories, ability to customize playbooks for each team and capacity to develop custom coaches. (MicroLeague, IBM, $54.95)

NFL Pro Football: Not to be confused with *NFL Video Pro*, *NFL Pro Football* is an action-strategy game developed by **Distinctive Software**. It is compared with John Madden Football II on page 44 of this issue. (Konami, IBM, $49.95)

NFL Video Pro: Anyone who has ever envied those sportscasters who sit at their desks in Sports Central, preparing their brief reports for half-time as they are surrounded by monitor after monitor of constant football action, should love this game. Not only can one view all 14 NFL games simultaneously while viewing digitized footage representing each game, but one can intervene on behalf of any given team at any given time and make the calls necessary to turn games around. Each of 28 teams has its own custom playbook, accessible to the gamer, and the gamer gets to be the ultimate head coach. Good calls are rewarded with film footage and digitized voice affirmation. Wins are rewarded with newspaper-style statistical summaries and a variety of

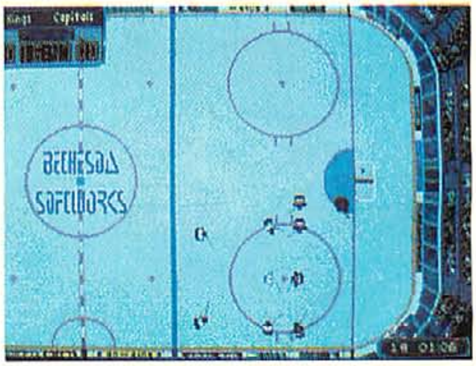


MicroLeague Baseball 4.0

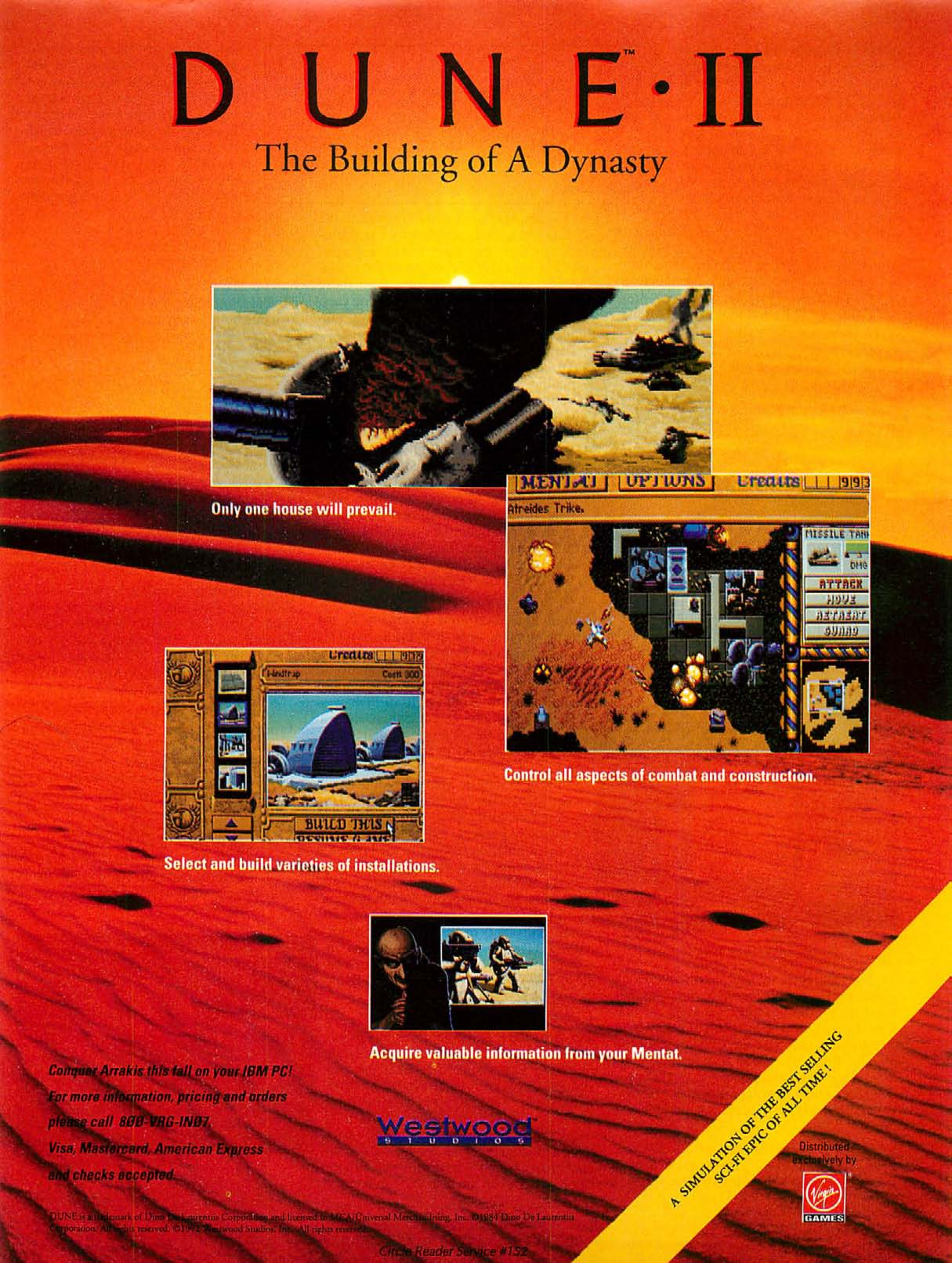
individual and team statistics. (Konami, IBM, $79.95)

NHLPA Hockey '93: Not only does this remake use real player names of NHL players, but it has unique new features like: opportunity to involve the crowd in the game (a crowd meter allows gamers to know how much the crowd is in the game and how it is affecting one's players); ability to put goons ... er ... enforcers into the game to take out key players from the other team; more statistics to be tabulated; an organist who plays all the cliche sound bytes; an battery-powered Insta-Save option; and more fight options provided. Naturally, the goalie's crease has been modified to reflect recent rules changes and, in a less than encouraging feature, *NHLPA Hockey '93* became the first game to feature blood on the ice. Unfortunately, the game misconducts that are supposed to accompany such bloodlettings are not included with the violence. (Electronic Arts, Sega Genesis, $59.95)

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3: In addition to better graphics (256 color) and a 3/4 view of the players (for those who don't like to play from the overhead perspective), *Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3* offers more intuitive controls (like holding down longer on the mouse button when one wants to execute a slap shot), icon-based menu system, "smarter" artificial intelligence routines for non-gamer-controlled players and better sound support. In addition, there is plenty of video glitz, like digitized footage of slapshots, referee calls and, of course, fights. WGH3 is smoother and more exciting to play than ever. (Bethesda, IBM, $59.95)



Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3



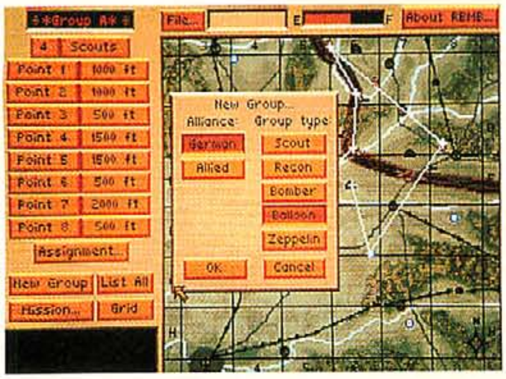
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ATAC: Players take on South American drug cartels as the leader of the United States's "War On Drugs" in this combination simulation/strategy game. On a strategic level, players command a task force of F-22 flighter bombers, helicopters and 250 secret agents. As agents provide leads to the locations of important coca plantations, manufacturing facilities and warehouses, the player sends helicopters to confirm those locations in low-flying reconnaissance runs. Once the preliminaries are accomplished, the player takes the controls of an F-22 and personally buries the drug lords' infrastructure in the "snow." (MicroProse, IBM, $59.95)



Car & Driver

Super VGA Air Warrior: In a fascinating experiment, the designers at **Kesmai** and the marketers at the **GEnie** network have asked **Konami** to distribute packaged versions of the impressive multi-player flight simulator,



Red Baron Mission Builder

Air Warrior. **Kesmai** usually distributes its games via the **GEnie** network, but finds that some people don't enjoy spending all that time downloading a program. Now, would be pilots can purchase the latest build of the popular flight simulator with its gorgeous SVGA cockpit, install it like any other program and plug into immediate on-line action via their **GEnie** account. (Konami, IBM, no price)

Car and Driver: As previewed in *CGW* #100, this test driving simulation uses a license obtained from *Car and Driver* magazine to enhance the fiction of providing the ultimate test track experience for car aficionados. In fact, the main interface screen looks like the table of contents of the magazine and one can choose cars from these contents or read actual reviews of the cars. There is a delicious choice of quality machines including the Porsche 959, the Ferrari F-40, the Lotus Esprit Turbo, among other symbols of phallic virility. The test courses include the Monterey Raceway, California's Pacific Coast Highway and the San Dimas Mall parking lot, among others. Of course, the game includes several viewing and replaying possibilities, as well as the ability to record an entire race for later view. This may be a good way to defer the disappointment of someone who was actually wishing for the *real thing* for the holidays. (Electronic Arts, IBM, $59.95)



Comanche: Maximum Overkill: In the past, helicopters were difficult to fly. This was an extremely reasonable price to pay, however, for their versatility and ability to fly NOE (nap of the earth). Now, if the flight model used by **NovaLogic** in their new helicopter simulation is anywhere close to as realistic as they claim it is, helicopters are going to be easy to fly. In *Comanche: Maximum Overkill*, the design team has provided would-be computer pilots with some of the most exciting and fast-moving 3-D terrain to fly NOE that we can ever remember. Frankly, the technology used in this simulation is some of the hottest in the business (if not *the* hottest). The scenarios may not be as realistic as they could be from an air support doctrinal standpoint, but they sure provide lots of excitement and plenty of challenge. Our editor doesn't fly many simulations (at least, in front of people), but we had to pull him away from this one. (NovaLogic, IBM, $69.95)

F-15 Strike Eagle III: Versatile, violent and victorious. Those are the kinds of adjectives that should accompany this cutting edge flight simulator when it gets into simulation junkies' hands. In the aircraft, gamers can choose to serve as either pilot or Weapons System Officer (WSO). A major innovation enables gamers to either have a modem buddy in the back seat or to challenge a friend in head-to-head competition. Also, even the beta version that we saw had significant improvements in the array of weaponry, as well as the way HUDs and cockpit displays were implemented (including a fully-functional Forward Looking Infra-Red pod implementation for night vision through the HUD). Also, if the design team doesn't have to downsize the world from the beta, it is the most detailed world we've seen in a flight sim (including the most realistic sky we've vicariously experienced through the computer). (MicroProse, IBM, $79.95)

Falcon MC: The original ground-breaking combat simulation will come to the Macintosh this holiday season to the delight of the



F-15 Strike Eagle III

jet set. The program based on the 2.5 version of Falcon will offer Mac color, new missions, expanded weapon systems, a more detailed cockpit, and a more realistically rendered flight model. Fill the void in your stocking and fill the void in Macintosh flight sim software. (Spectrum HoloByte, Macintosh, $69.95)

Jump Jet: Computer flight-jocks may jump straight up out of their seats when they see this product featuring the AV-8B Harrier strike fighter; the only active combat jet that can take off and land vertically. *Jump Jet* is a high-profile state-of-the-art remake of **Mindscape U.K.**'s Amiga game of several years ago. Pilots will fly the sorts of sorties one would expect of this low flying craft — frequent, short, fast-paced, ground attack and close air support missions. It features a



SVGA Air Warrior

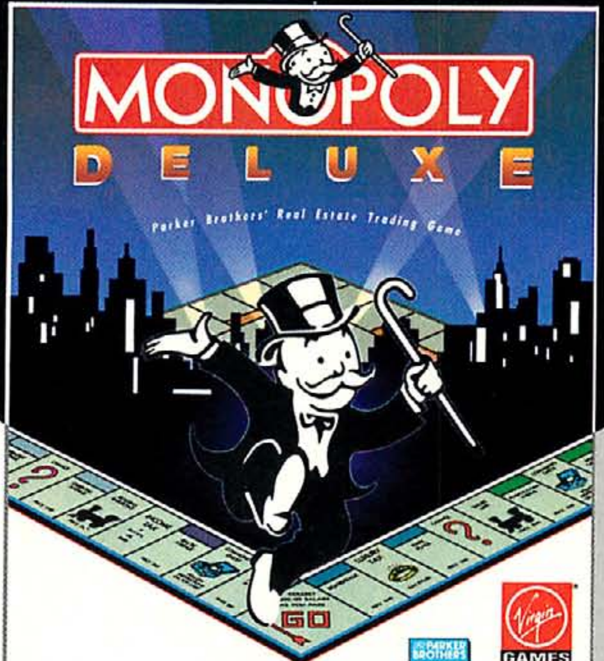
Trade Up!
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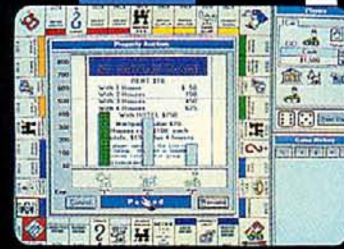


WINDOWS ™ version



WINDOWS ™ version





IBM PC version



IBM PC version

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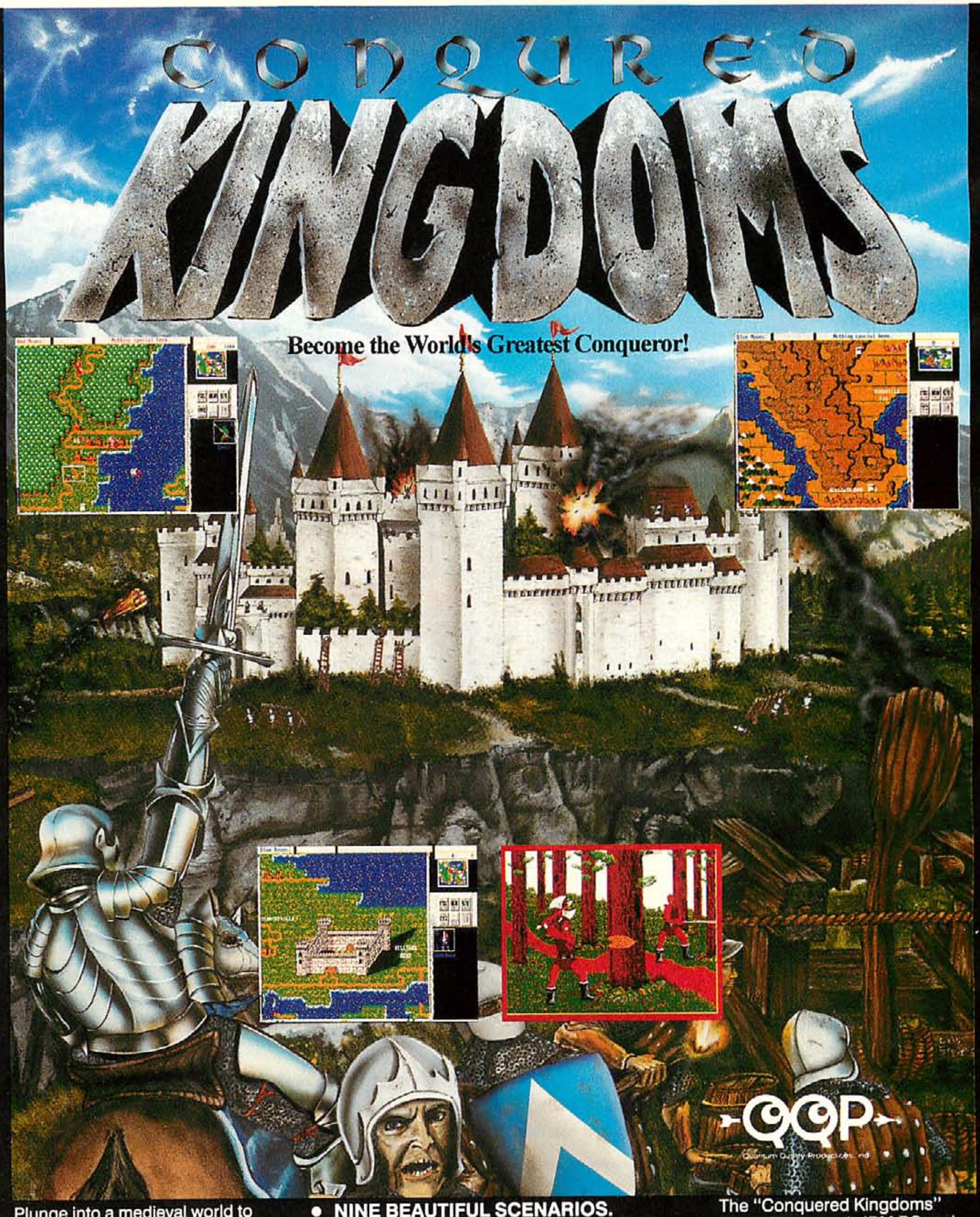
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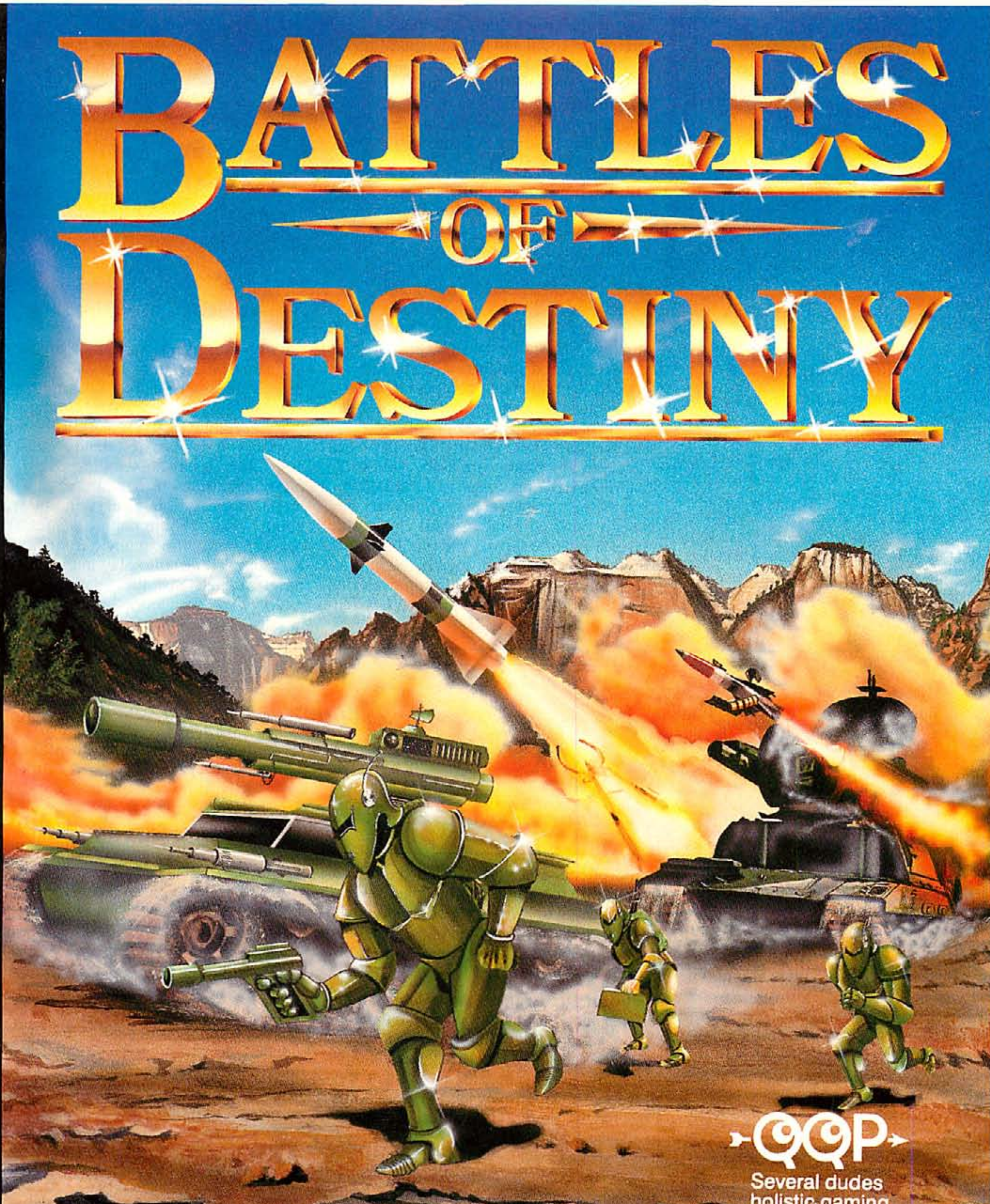
PARKER BROTHERS

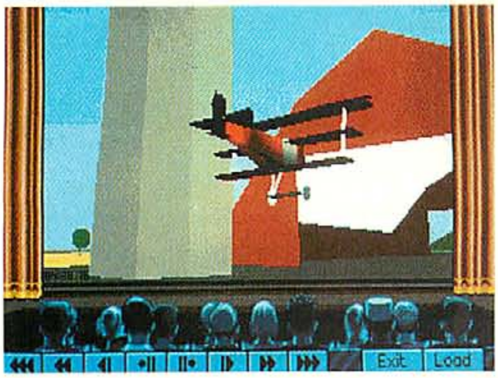
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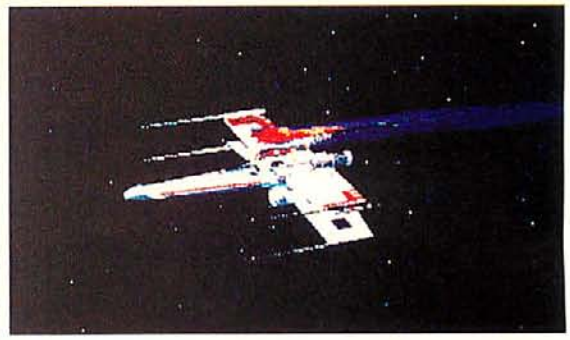


Stunt Island

hot, rock sound track to get the adrenaline pumping. (MicroProse, IBM, $69.95)

Red Baron Mission Builder: For what is undoubtedly an 'A' flight simulator (even for non-flight sim buffs), the premise that more is better really applies in the case of this expansion disk. Featuring a powerful mission builder which allows players to create an endless array of flights with varying missions, paths, destinations, targets, formations and pilot qualities, other variables such as time of day and weather can also be factored into the player-generated designs. In addition to new missions limited only by one's imagination, several new aces have been included for duels and many rare, little used and experimental airplanes have been added to the flight roster. Two flaps up for *Red Baron Mission Builder*. It's just what the players wanted and is worthy of the Pour Le Merite. (Dynamix, IBM, $29.95)

Stunt Island: For the player who has ever wanted to fly a crop duster through a barn or a Mig 29 through a tight canyon, or for those who wanted to *film* such daring feats, there' s *Stunt Island* from *Buena Vista* (a tiny division of Disney). The player assumes the role of stunt pilot, director, film editor or a mixture of roles for a Hollywood production company. As the pilot, the player can compete in a Stunt Pilot of the year contest, fly various stunts in front of the camera, or just explore the island setting. There are 40 different planes to try out, including an F-16, U2, F117 Stealth Fighter, 747, Cessna 172 and others. As director, the player will build sets and scenery, position cameras, and choose the type of stunt to be flown. And finally, as film editors, players will put together scintillating action shots using an editting deck that may set the standard for future VCR features. (Buena Vista, IBM, $59.95)



X-Wing Fighter

X-Wing Fighter: A short time in the future in our very own galaxy, gamers will have the opportunity to prove they are made of the same heroic fiber as Luke Skywalker. Indeed, they will almost become competitive allies of the *Star Wars* protagonist as they serve in a different part of the conflict from our hero. Larry Holland's latest flight simulation is an outstanding use of computer technology to put gamers right in the midst of the action. Everything he learned about coding campaign games (from *SWOTL*) and action games (from *Their Finest Hour*) comes into play in this intriguing new product. See the Sneak Preview in *CGW* #99 for more information. (LucasArts, IBM, $79.95)

Alphabit Blocks: Bananas the monkey and Jack (the one who resides in a cube and retired from running fast-food restaurants) provide hours of babysitting in this cute edutainment product for Windows from **Sierra**'s **Bright Star Technology** subsidiary. The aforementioned characters not only teach the alphabet to children, but they also communicate the sounds of the letters and how to form their mouths in order to pronounce those sounds correctly. (Sierra, IBM with Windows, $69.95)

Follow the Reader: Beach blanket bingo is not the goal when Mickey Mouse takes off for the beach for fun in the sun and provides reading lessons on the run (verbs in the surf?) for children from ages 4 to 7. In the sequel to *Mickey's ABCs*, children use a no-typing interface to put together animated stories about Mickey and the gang. Then, sound effects and voices bring the adventures to life, creating an atmosphere where children want to learn to read. Children who read can even print out their own stories and pictures to read at a later time. (Walt Disney Computer Software, IBM, $49.95)



Carmen USA Deluxe

Island of Dr. Brain: As the doctor's new lab assistant, the player journeys to the good doctor's secret island in search of a special battery. Naturally, Dr. Brain has set up a series of security puzzles to prevent trespassers from entering his top-secret facility. Fortunately for youthful gamers, this sequel to the very successful *Castle of Dr. Brain* features an EncycloAlmanacTionaryOgraphy to help them with the many logic, matching, science puzzles to be encountered. Also, the game changes via a randomization sequence, so no one can expect any walk-throughs for this adventure. (Sierra, IBM, $49.95)

Kid Pix: Santa's elves must have cousins at Broderbund. Clearly, if there were such a thing as a kid's wishlist for what could possibly make a paint program more fun, *Kid Pix* has found the recipe. Filled with plenty of little surprises, the sights and sounds include a talking alphabet (English or Spanish) and "rubber stamps" (with their own wacky sound effects). Who knows what kids will find under their own masterpieces when they erase them? One thing is for sure, it will be something else that is fun to color as they work with one of the broadest color palettes and the most painting tools that we have ever seen in a child's paint program. (Broderbund, IBM, $49.95)

The Manhole (New and Enhanced): Imagine a hands-on *Alice in Wonderland* where children uncover wild animated sequences and bizarre discoveries with nearly every click of the mouse. When **Cyan**, a CD-Developer for **Activision** originally created *The Manhole*, it was the very first interactive CD entertainment product to ship. Adults and children alike were fascinated with just how many layers of weird-



Island of Dr. Brain



HE'S LIVING PROOF THAT THE GODS HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR

Here's what the reviewers are saying:

"Heimdall is constantly surprising and so huge it is going to be some time before you have exhausted the possibilities!"

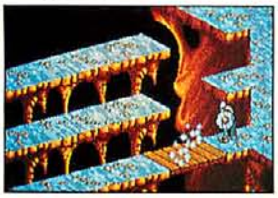
"A delightful combination of action and animation."

"The graphical content is never less than good and in many places it's stunning."

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Kid Pix

ness and frivolity could be found in each segment of the product. Now, the creative CD comes packed with even more sounds and animated sequences to help a new era of gamer/player/discoverer experience the playful atmosphere. (Activision, IBM and CD-ROM, $49.95 and $59.95)

Rodney's Fun House: Rodney Alan Greenblat's illustrations have been popular with parents and children alike for years. Now, the same colorful illustrations adorn a children's product that is both reminiscent of **Activision**'s classic *Little Computer People* and **Broderbund**'s *The Playroom*. Children will play memory games like Concentration, guessing games and counting games in a playful environment designed specifically for ages 3 to 6. (Activision, IBM and CD-ROM, $49.95 and $59.95)

Swamp Gas: An alien scout has to discover all of the important states, cities and landmarks in the U.S. as part of the fiction underlying this geographical learning game. As a reward for answering geographical trivia questions, the player gets to unwind with three variations on classic action games in the Alien Arcade. The product has been available on Macintosh for some time, but should be out on MS-DOS machines before Christmas. (Inline Design, IBM and Macintosh, $49.95)

Turbo Science: Played in an arena that looks vaguely reminiscent of the junkyard in the old *Bill Cosby / Fat Albert* cartoon show, *Turbo Science* is a race against opposing science teams and toward scientific knowledge. The game is designed for ages 9 to 14 and has enough clever cartoon graphics and impressively animated discoveries to keep most any budding Einstein enthralled. (Dynamix, IBM, $49.95)

Where in the USA is Carmen Sandiego (Deluxe): One needn't be an opera lover nor a Southern Californian to know that Carmen



Turbo Science

Sandiego is the first word in making the lessons of *how to learn* enjoyable. The red-coated V.I.L.E. villianess is back in the U. S. of A. with enhancements to add even more entertainment value to what is a "top engrossing" (if not top grossing) product. While enlarged to an impressive 8 MB on the old hard disk, the inclusion of 50 topographic state maps, talking characters, original music, 3,000 new clues and more of those lovably, wacky animations makes Carmen the true star that she is. Catch Carmen for the holidays (if you can). (Broderbund, IBM, $79.95)

Now if all that information doesn't fall on our readers' significant gift givers like an avalanche on an unwitting Alpine climber, we'll be surprised. It takes a lot of work to put that much information together and, the truth is, we wouldn't bother if we didn't have an ulterior motive ourselves. That is, we want to give a few hints to *our* significant gift givers, as well.

Of course, now that we've confessed our wicked motives, we have another confession. There were a few products we wanted to mention, but we just couldn't figure out where to put them. So, in this case, we'll call them stocking stuffers.

FLICKS! Film Review Library: Although this product is priced higher than one would expect of a stocking stuffer, we didn't know exactly where to put it. The product contains details of over 30,000 movies, complete with colorful animated graphics and music written specifically for each film category. The product allows film buffs to sort by numerous data fields and even has



Johnny Castaway

its own trivia game associated with the database. (Villa Crespo, IBM, $69.95)

Kids & Computers: Our sister publication just hit the stands a couple of weeks ago. It is a hands-on, parent-oriented magazine designed expressly to meet the needs of parents in the computer age. At $12 for a one year subscription (six issues), it's cheaper than a college textbook and might help insure that a child eventually needs one.

Screen Antics: Johnny Castaway: In the first of the story-telling screen savers, Johnny Castaway ends up having worse luck than the crew of the Minnow. He looks the wrong direction as a goofy aviator flies by; nearly has a run-in with the infamous Flying Dutchman; and always seems to catch junk instead of fish when he dips his hook into the water. Well, at least he gets to wine and dine a gorgeous mermaid in one sequence. The animation is delightful in this first effort from **Jeff Tunnell Productions** and this is definitely the most entertaining utility we've ever seen. (Dynamix, IBM, $34.95)

Finally, here's the one stocking stuffer that no computer game loving stocking stuffer can afford to be without:

Computer Gaming World: Twelve issues per year (of over 100 pages each) include: computer gaming news, views, gossip, hints, strategies, reviews and analysis. At $28.00 (for U.S. subscriptions), it's a bargain. CGW

Happy Holidays



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The Lay Of The Land

Part Two Of A Series On Golf Course Design

by Mark A. Willet

If there is a single element that makes **Accolade**'s *Jack Nicklaus Golf-Signature Edition* (*JNSE*) stand out when compared to any other computer golf game, it is the fact that the package includes a Course Design Module where one can recreate a favorite golf course or design a dream course. When done, one can play it alone, with computer opponents, with a circle of friends, or even distribute it nationwide through a loose network of BBSs that specialize in supporting *JNSE* golf. Some 100-plus hobbyist-designed courses are currently available on Accolade's own BBS, and these run the gamut from meticulous recreations of famous courses to a recent release of a course set on a planetoid in outer space.



The Alhambra landplot under construction. Building hills is as easy as simply outlining the area to be raised.

Since getting started in any new activity always seems to be the tough part, we're going to look at the first two steps usually associated with any golf course: "acquiring" the land on which to build a course and laying in the course routing — the mix of holes.

Unreal Estate

There are two more-than-suitable ways to develop the land one will need in order to build an original course. The first is simple: borrow it.

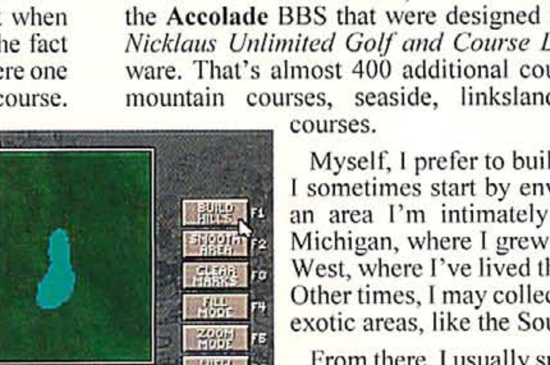
JNSE comes with two fully-developed landplots, California Canyons and Louisiana Banks. When the option "Create A New Course" is selected from the Design Module, *JNSE* prompts the would-be course architect to select from one of those. If, however, California and Louisiana are not desireable, there is an ocean of landplots, objects, and backgrounds available in various BBS libraries. All the *JNSE* hobbyist-designers I've met are honored when anyone borrows from their courses. So, architects with access to a modem can simply start their courses by borrowing/reworking someone else's landplot.

Since *JNSE* allows courses from its predecessor to be imported, not only can one borrow from the existing 100 *JNSE* freeware courses out there, but from the courses available on the **Accolade** BBS that were designed for the original *Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf and Course Design* (*JNUG*) software. That's almost 400 additional courses which include: mountain courses, seaside, linksland, parkland, desert courses.

Myself, I prefer to build my own landplots. I sometimes start by envisioning a course in an area I'm intimately familiar with (like Michigan, where I grew up, or the American West, where I've lived the past fifteen years). Other times, I may collect pictures from more exotic areas, like the South Seas.

From there, I usually spend 2-4 hours building my plot with the easy-to-use terrain editor found in the "Edit Plot" menu. From this menu, I can raise and lower hills, add water, shoreline, beach and even decorate the plot with native trees and foliage objects that I've either borrowed or created.

While doing this, I rarely think in specifics about the golf course I want to build. What I do think about is variety: Are there promontories and beaches along the shore? Do I have rolling hills, cliff sides, interesting little dips and valleys? Is there a stream? Should there be one? Why not? The more interesting the land, the easier it is to create a good golf course somewhere on it.



The *JNSE* Routing Screen. Routing is simply a matter of point-and-click.

Since, in game terms, I have unlimited money, there is absolutely no reason why my new golf course shouldn't be set on the finest and most compelling land that I can imagine!

By the way, that course landplot window encompasses almost 3,200,000 computer-simulated square yards. This is more than enough to put in at least three tightly laid-out courses or two loose ones. That is plenty of space to work when the electronic bulldozers arrive.

The Landplot Thickens: Laying The Course Track

The routing of holes on a golf course is an art in itself. If the architect's route is plain and uninteresting, the golfer's route will be so, as well.

It should come as no surprise that this is true of the computer course, too. But for every rule-of-thumb that may exist about routing, there's almost always a fine real course that breaks the rule and breaks it successfully.

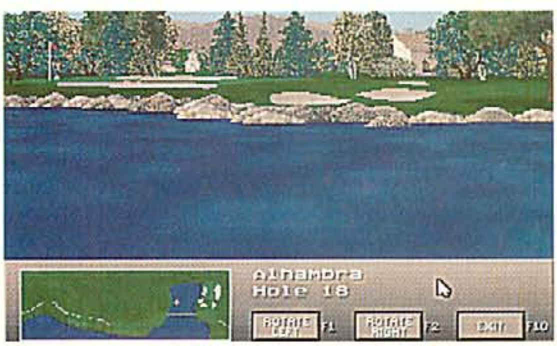


The Landplot Object Screen. *JNSE* allows you to place trees and other objects on your course landplot.

Here, then, are some key ideas that the new designer can use when laying out that first track. For the purposes of comparison, I'll mention some real courses as well as my own fictional Alhambra course.

— Since the days when Old Tom Morris created Muirfield, the most common course arrangement has placed the first and 10th tees, and the 9th and 18th greens, near the clubhouse. This makes it easier for golfers to choose to play only the front or back nine, or to stop at the clubhouse for a break. It's not, however, a law, and many older courses may leave the 9th and 10th out in the fields. When I created the Alhambra Hotel and Country Club design, I did just that for the sole purpose of hinting that this was an older course.

— While we often think of courses as being par 72, there are certainly some fine par 70s, 71s, and 73s out there. And *JNSE* certainly allows you to create an all par-3 course, or any other par-total you may desire. I let Alhambra stop at 71; again, just a small touch to indicate a less-than-contemporary design.



The finished 18th green at Alhambra. The *JNSE* Design Module can provide spectacular results.

— Variety and balance is critical. The conventional wisdom is that, for every right dogleg, the course should contain a left dogleg. This is intended to make the course a fair test for all instead of favoring a golfer who may excel at drawing or fading shots. While my Alhambra course has four par-4 left doglegs and four par-4 right ones, think about this: Augusta National only has two right-hand dogs, the first and 18th. Great holes are always great holes and seem to provide their own balance.

— Championship courses tend to run at about 7,000 yards in length. Usually, the older the course, the greater the likelihood that it runs short of that mark. While my fictional Alhambra comes in at over 6,800 yards, Pete Dye's real Kiawah Island course exceeds 7,700 yards, and the historic Merion comes in around 6,400.

— Length is not always an indicator of difficulty. The first hole at Jack Nicklaus' Castle Pines is a par-5 of over 640 yards! But it plays sharply downhill, and in Colorado's rarefied atmosphere it is not uncommon for the game's strongest professionals to reach the green in two.

— It is important to take elevation into consideration. Very long uphill par 4's and very short downhill par-5's might be best as par-5's and par-4's, respectively.

— The game seems more enjoyable when played downhill so that golfers can see where they're going. Consider keeping uphill holes and shots to a minimum. Though there are a few other uphill shots, Alhambra only has one hole that plays uphill end-to-end.

— Hole direction is another interesting variable because it forces the golfer to play with the wind coming from every which-way. Some of the best courses in the world have no more than two successive holes playing in the same direction before turning.



The landplot may be viewed from any position on the course.

— Most courses include two par-3's and two par-5's on each of the front and back nine. But, again, history provides variety: The Old Course at St. Andrews only has one 3 and 5 per nine holes; and some of Jack Nicklaus' courses, including Sherwood Country Club, have three 3's and three 5's on the back nine.

— Par-3's usually don't start or end a course. In the first instance, this is because it doesn't give the golfer a chance to exercise a fully-powered drive to get warmed up. Par-3's are usually "control" shots. In the second, it's because par-3's rarely offer the same degree of challenge that one associates with the final hole.

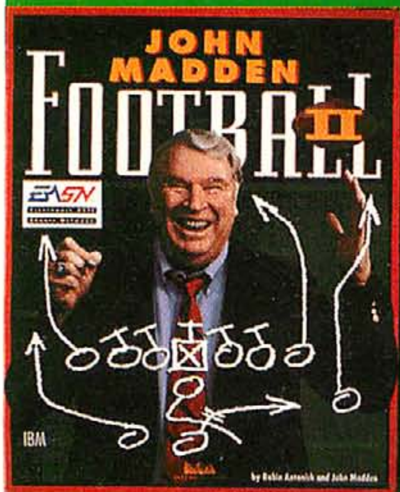
— Of the four typical par-5's, two are often reachable in two strokes, and two tend to be reachable in three. Mackenzie, designer of Augusta, tended to think of par-5's as "par-4 1/2's" and tempted the golfer to shoot for the eagle. Alhambra has one clearly reachable in two, one full-blown three-shot par 5, and one which may be reached in two under the right conditions.

— Getting the right mix of alternating par-3's, 4's, and 5's is certainly a noble effort, and can add greatly to the golfer's sense of variety. Alhambra has an unusual five consecutive par-4's. The course just seemed to fill out best that way. But those five holes are so unique to themselves that in a year of play on both the *JNUG* and *JNSE* versions, not one gamer has ever commented on the unbroken string.

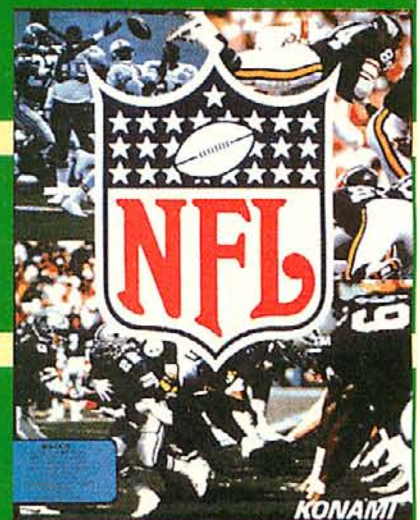
— Rules are made to be broken. And it's your course, of course. See ya at the first tee. CGW

A One-On-One Match-Up

EA's *John Madden Football II* and Konami's *NFL* Go Head-To-Head







by Jason R. Brooks

For the football aficionado, the time has arrived for "couch potatoism" (or "couch potatoeism" if you hold high political office). But let's face it, there are simply not enough games to keep you glued to the set for the entire season. Even after watching ESPN's coverage of the PFL (Polynesian Football League), there are still too many hours available for social discourse, interaction with others and mere living.

TITLE:	JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL II	NFL
SYSTEM:	MS-DOS	MS-DOS
# PLAYERS:	0-2	0-2
PRICE:	$49.95	$49.95
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts	Konami
DESIGNER:	Robert Antonick and John Madden	Distinctive Software
SOUND CARD:	AdLib/CoVox/Roland	AdLib/Sound-Blaster/Roland
GRAPHICS:	EGA/VGA	EGA/VGA
DISK SPACE:	1.2 MB	1.2 MB
PROTECTION	Manual Look-Up	Manual Look-Up

Luckily, there are two new computer football simulations, each of which can safely carry one through an entire season without having to talk to another human being: **EA**'s *John Madden Football II* (*JMF2*) and **Konami**'s *NFL*. Whether either one "splits the uprights" or is thrown for a loss will be up to the gamer to decide.

The Playbooks (Documentation)

JMF2 comes with no less than four manuals; a game manual plus two defensive and one offensive playbooks. Each play is carefully diagrammed with general strategic comments for each type of formation (e.g. near, far, goal line). While the diagrams are easy to read and the name of each play yields additional information, it is often difficult to determine the subtle differences and what one should utilize at any particular time. Fortunately, John Madden himself is on the sidelines (or "on-line," at any rate) to offer assistance. The game manual offers succinct instructions, but with the plethora of plays, their actual impact must be determined by actual play in a practice or game mode. Overall, the manuals are sufficient for the user already familiar with football, and a novice may expect a long learning curve to understand the intricacies of actual formations.

NFL sports a much slimmer set of rules. While game mechanics and options are explained, the actual plays themselves can only be accessed during actual play-time. Perhaps this is because each team has a separate set of plays (although all teams share basic plays). As may be said of *JMF2*, the

Circle Reader Service #98

playbooks are geared to a user who is already "football-knowledgeable." In comparing the two programs, *JMF2* passes for a first down in this area.

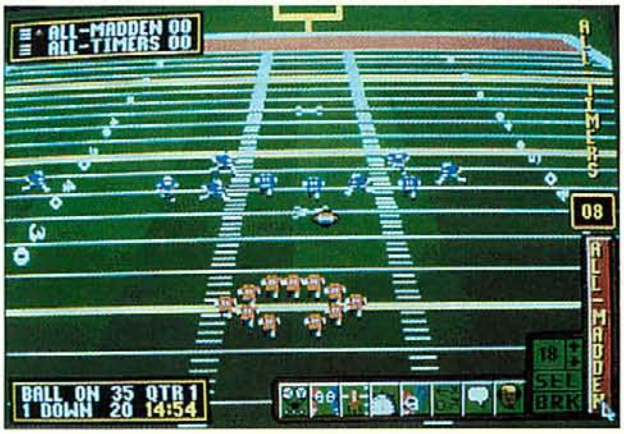
Sadly, neither program can offer "real teams." *JMF2* has 1990 teams by city and a number of "dream teams," but both team and player names are missing. *NFL* offers properly-named teams, but the players' names bear little resemblance to reality (although their statistics do reflect reality). The lack of an overall "player association" with which to negotiate mandates this failing. Baseball has a "Player's Association" which can sell such rights in one transaction; football would require individual deals with each and every player. Thus, one cannot expect to see "real teams and players" anytime soon. On the other hand, on-line users often trade teams which they have converted to a more accurate semblance of reality.

The Flash & The Crash (Graphics & Sound)

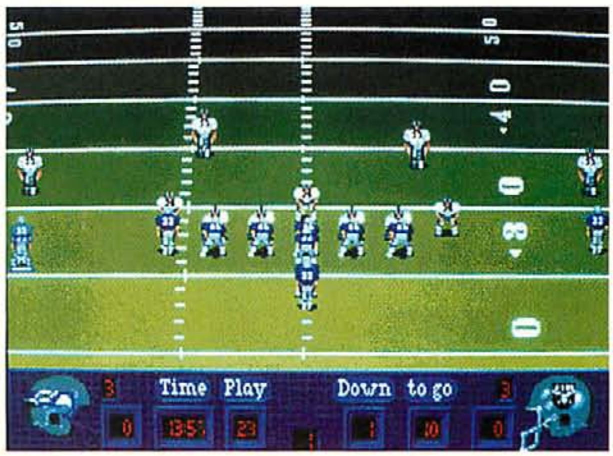
Sound and graphics have become increasingly important. *JMF2* has produced a state-of-the-art product — assuming that the year is 1989. But since *JMF2* was released in 1992, the penalty flags are flying all over the field. The sound is inarticulate and incapable of being understood; after playing with various sound options, one will quickly opt for "No Sound." But the graphics are even worse!

The players look like squat ogres who have escaped from a dungeon quest, and bear a distinct resemblance to the crew inhabiting *Grave Yardage*. When they "set," the players seem to squat on one knee and never "assume the position." The football is oversized, and brings to mind an oblong medicine ball, and the goalposts resemble something held over from a shareware game. Whistle blows — "Unnecessary roughness, fifteen yards!"

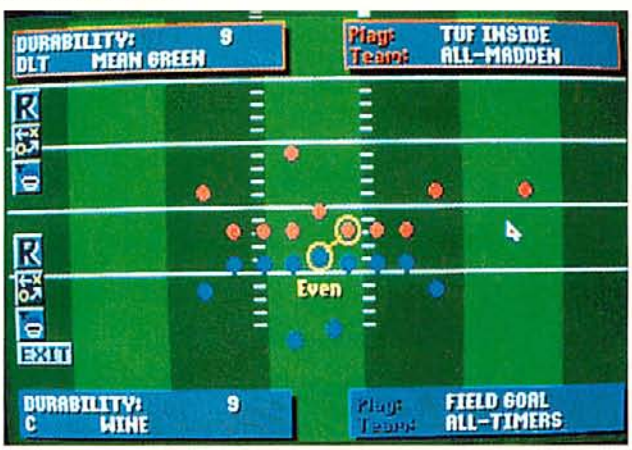
NFL's graphics are much better defined. The individual teams sport their proper colors, and while the perspective does not offer the depth downfield that JMF2 does, it is graphically more pleasing. The players are smaller, but do resemble football players. "First and ten!"



John Madden Football II



NFL



John Madden Football II

The sound is adequate, that is, functional and easy to understand. It doesn't amaze one with digitized voices or a quasi-"sound pack," but even so, it drops *JMF2* for a big loss.

The Fundamentals of The Game (Mechanics)

Game mechanics are more open to debate. *JMF2* allows joystick, keyboard or mouse interfacing, while *NFL* limits itself to keyboard and joystick. For those who have grown to appreciate the fine-tuning available with mouse input, its lack in *NFL* is disappointing.

Both programs offer weather conditions: sun, rain, snow. *JMF2* reflects weather both play-wise and graphically, i.e. in snow conditions, the field is white. *NFL* merely reflects the weather conditions in terms of game play, i.e. the ability to pass and hold onto the ball. Given *JMF2*'s marginal graphics, the reflection here is marginal at best.

Besides the "stock" plays, both programs offer the user the ability to "design-his-own" playbook. Such an editor is relatively easy to access in either program, but *JMF2* has a distinct advantage in "match-ups." One can look at his players and determine their strengths and weaknesses vis-a-vis the opposing team. A differential of "+2" or better illustrates domination, and the user may well have different playbooks in order to take maximum advantage of his player's personal strengths and weaknesses.

Play Execution (Game Play)

Perhaps *JMF2*'s greatest strength is John Madden himself. His "on-line" availability and analysis of "what to call when" yields an easy-to-follow tutorial in becoming an expert coach. Of course, one should avoid over-reliance on the computer-Madden — not because his advice is incorrect, but simply because the user will not mature into a first rank coach if he never makes his own decisions.

As a play begins, one may view it in a "single-frame" advance simply by pressing the space-bar. While this

(Continued on Page 66)

Circle Reader Service #124

CGW's Last Annual Computer Game Poetry Contest

We've gathered together in the Jack Kerouac Avenue Coffee House and Bongo Factory. Unbeknownst to its habitues, however, we have replaced the fine poetry they usually read with CGW brand instant art. The judges are ready, crushing their smoldering cigarette butts in the thin film of espresso left at the bottom of their cups, the bongos are cued and we only have a brief moment to remind the participants that the three top prize winners receive CGW back issue binders, as noted in issue #99. Before announcing the award-winners, however, we have a full evening of diverse and perverse verse for your metrical pleasure.

Rebels Without A Cause

Note that you asked for a poem as Question #61,
which is also "Playing Lately?"
Bet you get a lot of short poems with
game titles in them!
D. Hartl
Traverse City, MI
Okay, so that wasn't actually a poem.
He was right, though.

I think that you guys really need,
A warning, so this you should heed:
Another stupid question,
And I'll bust your head in,
So sober up and stop smoking weed.
Rob Jones
Ewing, NJ
Does this mean we can't serve on the Supreme Court?

Mangled Meter

There once was a young man named Mick,
Who flew till his girlfriend was sick.
He shot down a lot,
But his carpals were shot
'Cause he couldn't afford a joystick.
Brad Smith, Salt Lake City

I want more games for the Mac LC.
They're all made for IBM, you see.
How can I have fun,
When my housework is done
'Cause there's not a Mac version for me?
Barbara Jenke, Hot Springs, SD

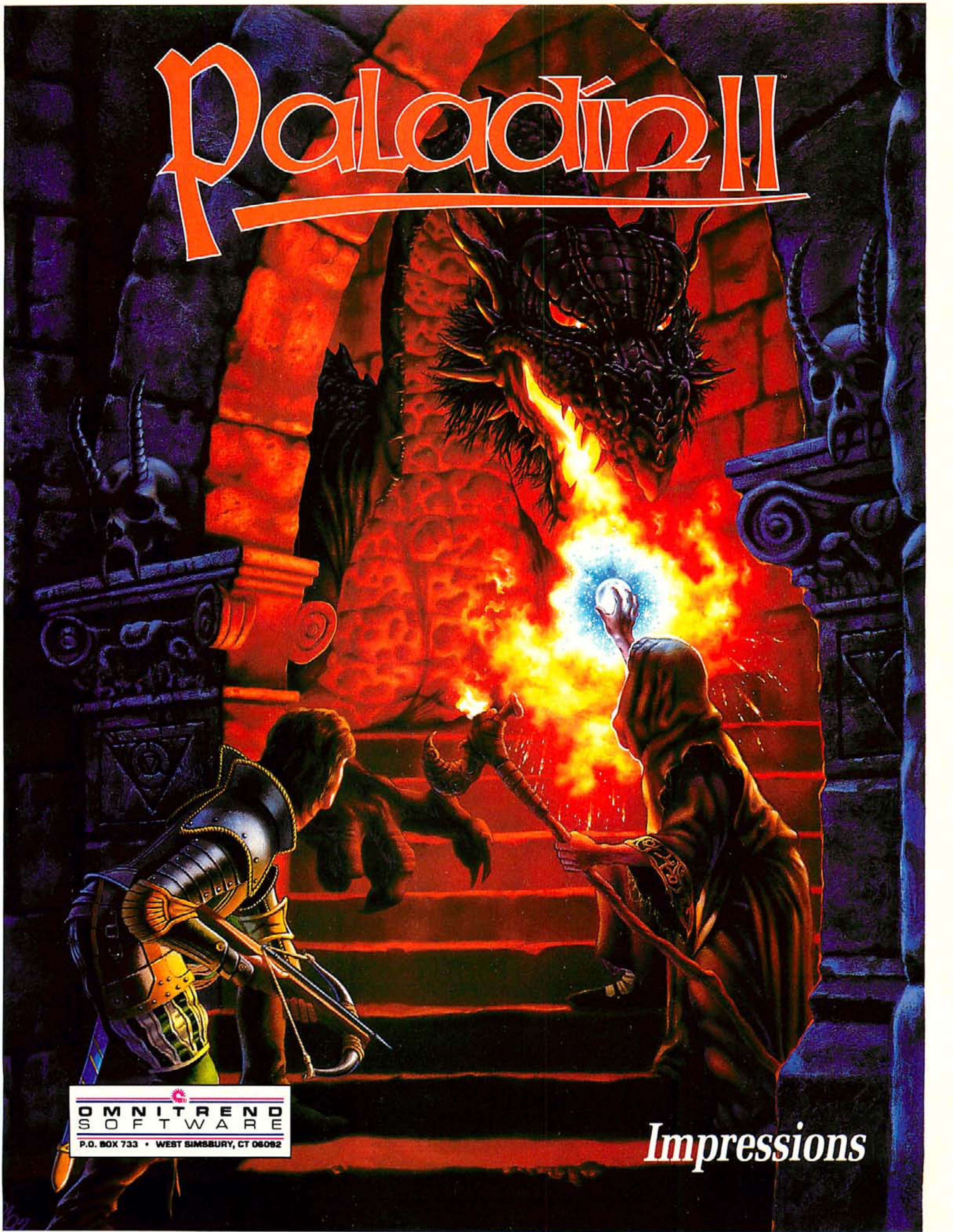
"The Dark Side of Tetris"
To Tetris and all its descendents,
Please think of my lonely dependents.
While I sit hypnotized,
Watching falling shapes rise,
Each smolders with angry resentments.
Bob Olivere, Phoenix, AZ

Scorpia's sage musings are a must,
For us adventurers not to go bust.
Frustrated to the hilt,
We know she won't wilt,
From assisting with hints you can trust!
Martin Hrouat, Slidell, LA

The Anecdotes to Civilization

As I build my own Civilization,
I have come to the realization,
Its AI has no peer,
Babylonia I fear,
Will be the first with a space station.
Bob Olivere
Phoenix, AZ
Now my wife is complaining,
And is thinking of leaving,
Rationalization?
Civilization!!
Where my time is spent playing.
James Logue
New Fairfield, CT

There once was a man named Jason
Who liked to play Civilization.
His newborn was eighteen
When he glanced from the screen
And his wife, he found, was on
permanent vacation.
Kirk Carroll
Alford, FL
The price of games is out of sight.
For average games my wallet's tight.
To make me a buyer
I must see "Sid Meier"
It's a guarantee they got it right.
Mark Molus
Oshkosh, WI


Paladin II
OMNITREND SOFTWARE
P.O. BOX 733 • WEST SIMSBURY, CT 06092
Impressions

Poetry



SONGS IN THE SPRITES

"The Gamer's Counting Song"
(In Hexidecimal Meter)
One, two, three, four,
Get those lemmings out the door!
Five, six, seven, eight!
Civilization! (Is it that late!)
Nine, A, B, C,
Up all night on a gaming spree!
D, E, F, oh gee!
Computer gaming has captured me!
Joseph Goodwin
Oklahoma City, OK

(To the tune of "Home On The Range")
Oh, give me my home,
When it's dark and I'm alone,
And the computer in my basement is on.
I'll play games till it's dawn,
Then I'll shave and be gone,
Till the next night brings me back down.
Games, games, buy more games!
Till I've spent my next paycheck on games.
Then my wife will know why,
To our creditors, we lie,
Till she figures out how to make my hard disk die.
R. Chris Doyle
Gahanna, OH

IMPERIAL FORCE

I've voiced the call "Tis War!"
But first, I must explore
And build up a base
At a hurried pace
Before the big guns can roar.
With fighters and subs around
My armies and transports seek enemy ground
With carriers and destroyers
Battleships and cruisers
The might of my force is found.
To the computer I've rushed in a hurry,
I've fought till my vision was blurry.
For many an hour,
I was caught in the power,
Of Empire, the wargame of the century.
Guy Gustafson
Bethel, CT

With hours left to while away
With games that challenge the matter gray,
I'll sit here at night until I tire
With a pot of coffee and Empire
Until the sun dawns in another day.
David Darnell
Clarkton, MD



Honeymoon Tycoon

Our wedding was a bright day in June
And we embarked on a short honeymoon.
My bride was thinking romance
But I couldn't pass up the chance
For a whole weekend of Railroad Tycoon.
John Hamilton
State College, PA



CPU Haiku

Haiku usually consists of 17 syllables in a five, seven, five format. Though it is usually untitled, the first offering is entitled "Patrol at Dawn (Red Baron),"

Sky blue, grey and red
Hot guns speak in cold, tight air
One rule - win or die.
B. Barrick
Garland, TX

My eyes are weary
As fresh legions are rallied
beyond the hushed glow.
Warren Austin
Plattsburgh AFB, NY



Kitty Litter

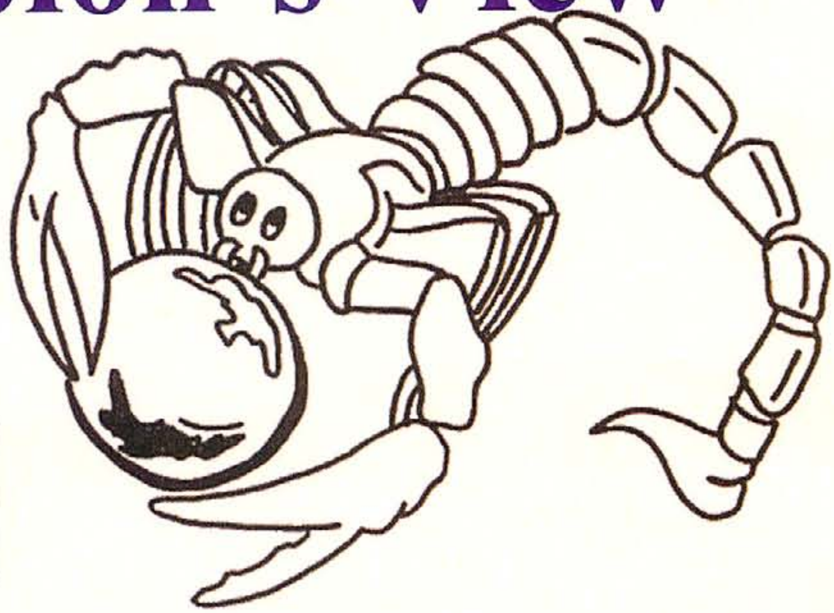
Blast the kitties out of space,
Fire particle cannons in their face.
Turn Kilrathi ships into waste,
Save the missiles, just in case.
Jason M. Spangler
East Liverpool, OH

There once was a man from Earth,
Whose hair was as blue as a Smurf.
Killed critters with paws
From his ship, Tiger's Claw
Of Kilrathi there now is a dearth.
Marc Tofsted
Holland, PA



Continued on pg. 130

Scorpion's View



MicroProse's *Darklands*

as told by Scorpia

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to provide this forum for her distinctive and often controversial prespective.

Most CRPGs are set in a fantasy world of the designer's own creation. It's the simplest way to allow for a land where magic and other mystical forces can operate in a believable fashion. *Darklands*, however, takes a step in a new direction by placing the adventure in a real setting, 15th century Germany.

Outside of a few mythical creatures from folklore, medieval Germany is recreated rather well, which is no surprise, as a great deal of research went into this effort. Walled cities, isolated villages, bandit-infested roads, devout pilgrims trekking toward shrines, refugees from plaque-struck towns, evil barons who maltreat their serfs, merchant caravans plodding the trade routes, bishops and knights who extort outrageous tolls — all these and more are part of the game.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect is the inclusion of religion. In a typical CRPG, gods are either an invention of the designer or not mentioned at all, except possibly in the most oblique fashion. Since *Darklands* is set in real Germany, however, it contains a real religion, namely Catholicism.

Every town and village has at least one church where the characters can go to Mass or confession. This is handled with text, and no Catholic ritual is actually portrayed beyond a short paragraph stating that the party feels uplifted (in the case of Mass) or cleansed (in the case of confession).

The real purpose of religion is to allow the characters to call upon a pantheon of saints for temporary blessings or other benefits. Each party member has a virtue rating, which can be increased over time by doing certain good acts. This virtue, when combined with divine favor, is used to determine the success of a "saint call." All saints have a minimum virtue requirement, so obtaining more virtue is an important part of play.

This brings us to the magic system, which is unique among role-playing games. There are no mages casting fireballs hither and yon, or blasting opponents with mighty lightning bolts. Magic, as such, is accomplished only through the art of alchemy and by praying to saints.

Alchemy involves obtaining various formulae, and then mixing the required ingredients to create potions. These potions are of two types: offensive, to be used in battle against the enemy, and defensive, used to enhance attributes, weapons, and armor, or heal damage taken during combat.

Offensive potions can be thought of as grenades, since they are meant to be thrown at oncoming opponents. Like grenades, they cannot distinguish friend from foe, so once melee begins, hurling potions around can be a dangerous business. Thus, alchemy is usually an adjunct to battle and *not* an overwhelming force.

Defensive potions generally last about a day (except healing, which is of course permanent). This makes them of limited usefulness while on the road, but they come into their own when the party explores dungeons. The time scale is different in dungeons, and enhancing potions will usually stay in effect for the entire expedition.

Character creation is the most detailed and extensive of any CRPG on the market. The system is reminiscent of the pencil-and-paper games Traveller and Warhammer, in that career choices are important means of building a character.

The process starts with a basic template (one for males, one for females) of attributes. You then choose a background for the character, which will have some minor affects on certain attributes, as well as providing "basic training" in a variety of skills plus a pool of experience points that are used to increase the attributes of your choice (to a maximum of 40 points per attribute).

This represents the first 15 years of the character's life. After that, adulthood begins, with the character following various careers until you decide he or she has had enough training and is ready to adventure. Each career term of five years builds certain skills and attributes, and provides experience points for further increasing the skills of your choice.

So creating your group of four is going to take some time and effort. Nov-

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In 1492 Columbus discovered America - for God, Gold and Glory!

500 years later this is your chance to discover a new world!

FEATURES:

6 New Worlds to Discover

Piracy - mutiny & battles

Land & Sea combat

Simple point and click interface

8 ship types; 4 maps

5 competing nations

YOUR CHANCE TO DISCOVER AMERICA!



Animated people develop buildings all by themselves.



Watch your empire grow.



You will need to fight off pirates and more!

Impressions

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Circle Reader Service #86

A Dark and Stormy Opinion

by Johnny L. Wilson

As something of a gadfly and cynic, I tend to be extremely skeptical of absolutes in any form. Ethical absolutes tend to be conditioned by cultural presuppositions, religious absolutes tend to be forged from personal experiences, scientific absolutes tend to be made obsolescent by new discoveries and political absolutes seem to fall out of fashion in a cyclical manner. In short, even those ideas which some people hold dearest and strongest are not truly absolute. They do not hold true universally.

So, I really hate to see absolutes show up in a magazine which I am responsible for editing. Even when the writer responsible for such an absolute is a respected expert in, in this case, her field. Hence, I was horrified when I read this month's "Scorpion's View" and discovered that she could not recommend *Darklands* to anyone, not even me. Now, Scorpia is a columnist. We don't expect to agree with all her opinions and we give her leave to express them. That's why we often double her columns with reviews by other reviewers in order to provide checks and balances. Yet, I happen to be part of the exact target market that *Darklands* was aimed at and I expect to continue playing this game over the next several months.

I don't mean to understate the fact that *Darklands* has problems. I've had the game crash after sneaking into some raubritter's castle. I've had patrons "forget" that they had sent my party off in search of artifacts, even when those artifacts were in my possession. (Of course, the fact that I had accepted four quests at once without knowing what the limit was might have something to do with that.) I encountered the raubritter menu that ended up being printed as a text box instead of appearing in interactive menu form. I don't

(Continued on Page 58)

ice gamers may be a little overwhelmed by this, and even veterans will need to play with the creation process a bit to get a handle on all its subtleties (there is a pre-created Quick Start party for those who want to get into the game right away). For all that, this is the best character creation scheme I've seen yet in a CRPG, particularly since you have control over it from the start and can build exactly the type of characters you want.

time when he came under attack, and did not fight back at all until directed to do so.

The game makes extensive use of menus, with most actions accomplished by choosing from a list of options appropriate to the situation. At the city gates, for instance, you can decide to go in during broad daylight, wait for night and try to climb the walls, attempt to bribe a night guard to let you, and so on. Live action, actual movement, occurs only in combat and in traveling across the countryside on the wilderness map.



Combat is a quasi-real-time affair. It can run its course without any direction on your part, as the party will fight automatically when attacked and continue to fight until the battle ends, one way or another. However, you can halt the action at any time to give individual orders to your characters. These orders can be anything from having the character flee combat, to attacking a particular enemy, using a missile weapon, hurling a potion, or just moving to a different location.

This works well most of the time, although the AI is a little weak in some cases. For instance, Leo has just finished off his opponent and is looking for a new target. Hans is a short distance away, and the poor fellow has three enemies attacking him. Leo seems not to notice this, and decides to walk halfway across the screen to swing at someone already dead. Of course, you can stop Leo and have him help out Hans, but Leo really ought to have done that on his own.

There were also a few occasions when a character seemed not to understand his orders. As an example, Siegfried is directed to attack a particular opponent, but doesn't move or do anything at all. It might take two or three tries to get him to wake up and start fighting. There was, in addition, one

While the menus make interaction fairly simple (although the choices may not always be easy to make), it does give the game a static feel after a time. Every town looks just like every other town, offering pretty much the same things, with only minor variations. Certainly Leipzig was not the same city as, say, Salzburg, but you wouldn't know it from the presentation here. Some names (such as the central market and local inn) change from town to town, but overall there is nothing really different or unusual to set one place off from another. A little something here and there to give at least a few towns a personality of their own would have been welcome.

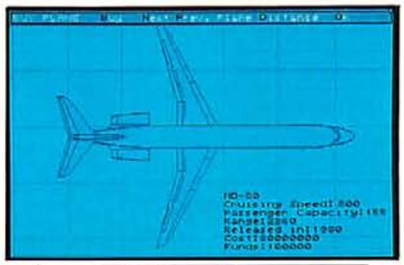
The party's basic goal in *Darklands* is to acquire fame and virtue, to be remembered in times to come as great and daring heroes. While this appears to be a novel twist, something a bit different than the more common "Kill Foozle" objective, in actuality the game isn't quite so different.

Your party will spend much of the game running errands for people, and these tasks are of two types: taking out

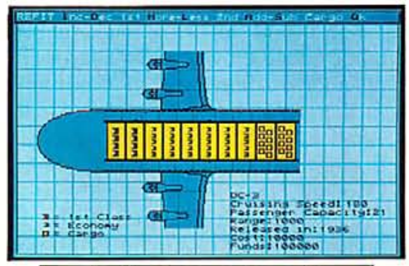
BUILD YOUR OWN AIRLINE!



- Develop your own global route network



- Buy the latest planes as new technology becomes available.



- You decide how to fit out all your planes.

Air Bucks is your chance to build an airline- it won't be easy, but if you make it the rewards are huge! Start with $100,000 and a DC3 in 1946, at the start of the air travel boom. Decide which places to fly to, where to use as a hub, when to buy new planes and which ones to buy. New planes become available over time, from a DC9 to Boeing's 747! But beware just because a plane is new does not mean it is right for you. You must also find the cash to pay for it; and planes don't come cheap! You are sure to need the help of your friendly bank sooner or later, or even to sell shares!



- *1 to 4 players (human or computer)*
- *Sophisticated economic model.*
- *World map can change every game.*
- *Fleet size larger than you're likely to ever need!*
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- *Easy to use point 'n' click interface.*



- You can even set the luxury level on your fleet.



- There's money to be made in cargo as well as passenger flights.



- Will you beat your rivals to this and other targets.

YOUR RUNWAY TO SUCCESS!

Impressions

Committed to Excellence in Strategy Entertainment

the local raubritter (robber knight) or retrieving a particular item for someone. Both will bring the party some measure of fame and money, but of the two, only the raubritters are generally worth your time and effort.

The quests to bring back items are inane, since they send you across huge distances, often half of Germany or further (and back, of course!), for a small amount of money (usually 5-6 florins) and with a time limit besides. Compare that to going only a short distance from town to kill the local raubritter, and picking up 20-40 florins for your work. Which makes more sense to do?

Between knocking off evil knights and decimating the bandit population around the country (bandits are everywhere), you can take time out to perform more heroic actions, such as clearing obstreperous Dwarfs out of the mines and going after dragons, once these rumors start showing up at the inns.

All this, however, is just marking time until you get the call from God (literally) that sends you on the way to the major encounter of the game. After that one, continuing on with the raubritters and silver mace errands is pretty much anticlimactic. So while there is no definitive end to the game (i.e., there is no "you won, it's all over" type message), there is generally no point to playing on, unless perhaps you want to see how much more fame you can rack up, or you left a dragon or two for dessert.



Shorn of its trappings, then, *Darklands* operates in much the same fashion as any other CRPG, with the party working toward that big encounter with Foozle, although the final confrontation, in this case, is not exactly a battle in the usual sense of the word. Here we do have something different, with the showdown resolved by making the right choice rather than battering an opponent into jelly.

Darklands also has its share of problems, both design flaws and bugs. There are several versions of the game extant, the most recent (as of this writ-

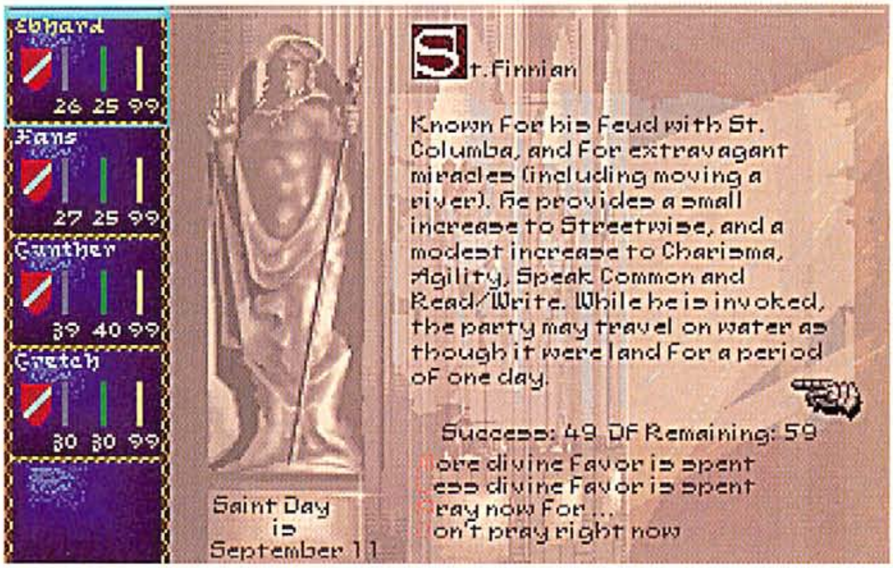
ing) being v483.06, which fixes some of the problems, but not all.

The game as originally released had, at the very start, three drawbacks: (a) no in-game restore; (b) no saving in the dungeons; and (c) while you could have as many save positions as you wanted, only the first nine were accessible; to bring up later saves, one or more of the first nine had to be deleted.

Version .06 corrects two of these problems, so that saves can be loaded from inside the game, and the save menu can be scrolled through to reach later positions without having to delete anything. However, it does *not* allow for saves to be made in the dungeons, and this is very serious indeed, since the game is liable to crash at any time, often in the dungeons.

The game can die when you click on a character's icon to bring up the inventory screen, going to black and staying that way. Or the game might just freeze where it is, not responding to the mouse or keyboard. Or the graphics may go berserk, with your characters suddenly showing up in ugly colors. If any of these happens in a dungeon, the only thing you can do is reboot and try again.

Version .06 seems to have fixed the black screen problem, but after I incorporated the patch into the original (v483.051) game, the program still froze on occasion, and I found the graphics were much more likely to go bad. In one instance, I had to go back to a save before last in order to get clean graphics again.



The real killer, however, comes at the end, in the Castle of the Apocalypse (the major encounter of the game). Behind the sixth door is an army of goblin lancers, who have an item you need. Your choices here are to fight them as a party, have your leader fight a single combat with a lancer, or call on a saint for help. Skipping over fighting as a party (which is pretty much useless), it comes down to whether you want to sacrifice one member of the group or everyone.

Consider Siegfried, my best fighter. He had natural endurance of 39 and

(Continued from Page 54)
know why the Alt-L command to load saved games didn't make it into the final product. I know the game can be extremely repetitive (particularly when one gets used to a certain solution working and uses it all the time), *but* I still *like* the game.

Darklands has an open-ended feel to it and an element of free-will that I haven't previously experienced in a CRPG. I mean, Scorpia is even right about the UBG, that spawn of Satan, being equivalent to a "Kill the Evil Foozle" ending, *but* even that ending underscores a fresh element in this game. Most CRPGs have a "Monte Haul" syndrome. They build up one's characters to god-like levels and end up having to take them down a peg when it is time to import them into the sequel. They arbitrarily state that something has happened to weaken one's characters or remove the characters' special weapons. At least, *Darklands* performs this service for the player interactively. The player decides if one character is going to make the sacrifice or not. The player decides if the entire party is going to bear the burden. One way or another, the party is weakened in the context of the story and play balance is restored toward both any future games or the party's return to *Darklands* itself (one can keep on playing after the main plot is solved). How many other CRPGs let the player's characters live on between sequels in *any* fashion?

Further, the game is as repetitive as Scorpia and some of the game's on-line critics have noted. One comes across some of the same encounters over and over. Yet, only occasionally did I find this disconcerting. I had a tendency to try all the options on the menu at one time or another. One time I might challenge a raubritter to single combat; the next I might sneak into his castle. Another time, I might besiege his castle. The same encounters didn't have to be handled the same. Another way that the game allowed me to bring variety into play was in changing the marching order. Since many of the encounters were based on the leader's current profile, even the same encounters played out differently with different leaders. I just don't know of another CRPG, with the possible exception of *Wasteland*, that gave me this much of a sense that the different characters in my party and the way I used them made a real difference.

Speaking of *Wasteland*, lots of CRPGs have used skill-based algorithms since its release, but *Darklands* is the first one that has really suspended my disbelief to the same extent. Having my party fall down a cliff because my best climber wasn't good enough; having to pay tolls because I had accidentally placed a leader with lousy charisma on the point; being turned down when asking to use a monastery's library because my leader was out of divine favor; or not getting quests because my party's reputation wasn't growing fast enough were all delightful touches.

I truly enjoy the variety of choices on the menus, by the way. What other game would give a party the choice of extorting a defeated witch for useful information; being bribed by a defeated witch (allowing her to give one alchemical formula); forcing her to repent (gaining divine favor in the process, but wondering how long her repentance could possibly last); or killing her? In what other CRPG does the party really have to think about whether to let a physicker try to heal them or not? In what other CRPG can one avoid a major battle by asking a saint for protection? How many potential ambushes can players sneak around and avoid in *most* CRPGs? I honestly believe that *Darklands* gives players more authentic role-playing choices than any CRPG since *Dragon Wars*.

Of course, it is entirely possible that Scorpia is right and I am wrong. She certainly plays more CRPGs than I do. Yet, I can't help but feel that part of the reason I don't play more CRPGs is because they feel so constraining, so unlike live people and paper role-playing. Maybe that's why I've only enjoyed a very few CRPGs and why I enjoy this one so much (the designers were heavily influenced by their own people and paper campaigns, played after hours in the **MicroProse** offices), because it stretches its wings and breaks the rules. Scorp may be right, but she certainly could have recommended the game to Sam Baker (see the strategy article in this issue) and me. We may be a minority, but we do undermine her absolute and I just couldn't bear to see that absolute stand without a counterpoint. *Darklands* does have problems, but it can certainly be recommended to someone, even if it's just 42 year old men with weird taste. **CGW**

strength of 39, both pumped up further by potions. His weapon and armor had been alchemically enhanced, and while his sword skill was maxed at 99, we had invoked St. George as an extra precaution. Siggy fought one-on-one with a lancer (done text-only), and the best he could do was a standoff. We got the item, but the lancer said "his wounds will never heal."

That was true, all right. Siegfried went from 39/39 to 14/15, and that drop was a *permanent* one. Not yet even 30, he was a wreck, barely able to totter around in his armor, much less wield a sword.

Calling on a saint (Godfrey, who can prevent fights from happening) wasn't much better. In this case, no combat takes place, but the lancers demand blood from each party member before they give up the item. As you probably guessed, this means a permanent drop in Strength and Endurance for each party member. While not quite as severe as what Siegfried suffered, it was certainly bad enough, averaging about 10 points per person per attribute.

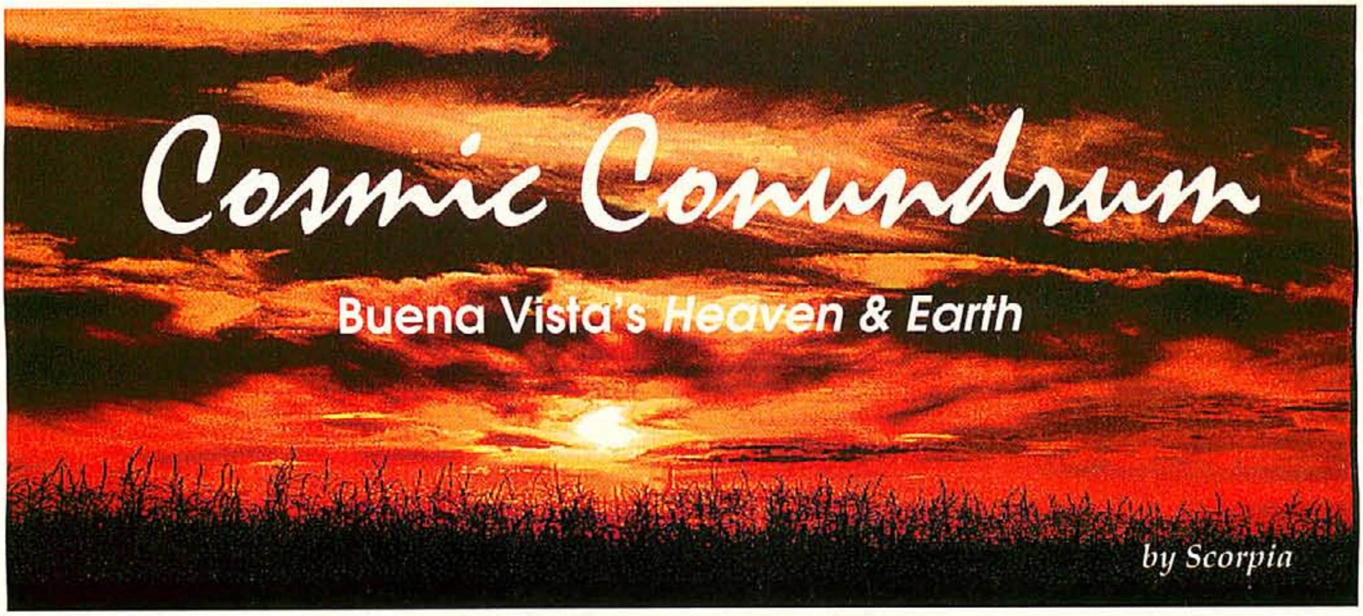
There seems no way around one or all being drained, as I tried this several times with the same results, one way or the other, depending on the choice made in the lancer room.

This, by the way, comes on top of having to give up all your gold (in my case, some 600 florins) elsewhere in the castle. So your team has sacrificed its money and its health to defeat a major demon from Hell, and what do they get? A free trip to the inn, a handful of pennies, and a lot of fame points. Is there something wrong with this picture?

Possibly some Bright Mind at **MicroProse** thought it would be a Good Idea to have the player "make a real sacrifice." If so, that Bright Mind needs a new brain. It is inexcusable to treat the player in this manner, to not only provide no real reward for success, but to make the victory a Pyhrric one. For this point alone, I would not recommend the game to anyone.

Darklands started out with a good idea, and had some interesting aspects. Unfortunately, between design problems (some of which I didn't have room to mention) and bugs, the game ultimately brings little or no satisfaction when "finished." This is a shame, since *Darklands* might have been one of the great ones. Instead, it turns out to be a game more to be avoided than anything else. **CGW**


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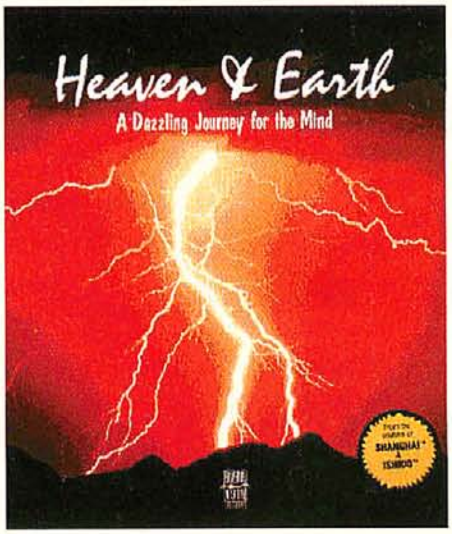


Cosmic Conundrum

Buena Vista's *Heaven & Earth*

by Scorpia

TITLE:	Heaven & Earth
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-Up
DESIGNER:	Michael Feinberg & Scott Kim
PUBLISHER:	Buena Vista Burbank, CA



Finding a unique game these days isn't easy. There are rafts of role-playing games, adventure games, flight simulators, war/strategy games, arcade games, and sports simulations, as well as computerized versions of game shows, board games, and card games. Sometimes, every game begins to look like every other.

So it's refreshing to come across a little gem like *Heaven & Earth*, which isn't quite like anything else out there. This product from **Buena Vista**, with overtones of Eastern mysticism, features four distinct sections: the pendulum, the card game, the illusions, and the pilgrimage.

Foucalt's Forte

The pendulum is described in the manual as a "toy." The goal is to influence the pendulum (via mouse or keyboard) to swing gently around the inside of a bowl until it comes to rest on a vortex, thereby "capturing" it. This is an exercise in patience and subtlety, since wild movements of the pendulum won't accomplish much. Inner harmony and peace of mind are definite assets when playing with the pendulum.

Whatever Suits You

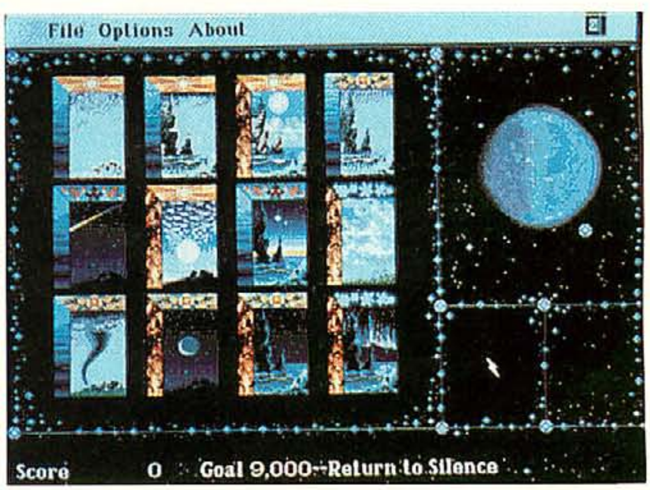
The card game is a deceptively simple strategy affair, where one tries to gather cards into tricks to accumulate as many points as possible. There are 48 prettily-designed cards in the deck, which are dealt out four at a time on the first hand, three on the second, two on the third hand, and finally the remaining 12 at once on the last hand.

The player chooses one card from each deal, until the deck is exhausted and he/she has twelve cards. These cards are then combined in a variety of ways to make the most points possible. What makes things interesting are the "celestial phenomena": suns, moons, stars, rainbows, lightning, and the like, which appear at random on the cards and turn them into point multipliers of either the positive or negative variety.

An added attraction to the celestial phenomena is the use of small animations and sounds. For example, picking up a card with the setting sun causes the sun to actually slide below the horizon to an accompaniment of chirping crickets. Picking the full moon precipitates a moonrise, complete with wolf howling in the distance. There is a little something like this for each phenomenon, which adds a nice touch. For extended play sessions, the animations and/or sounds can be turned off.

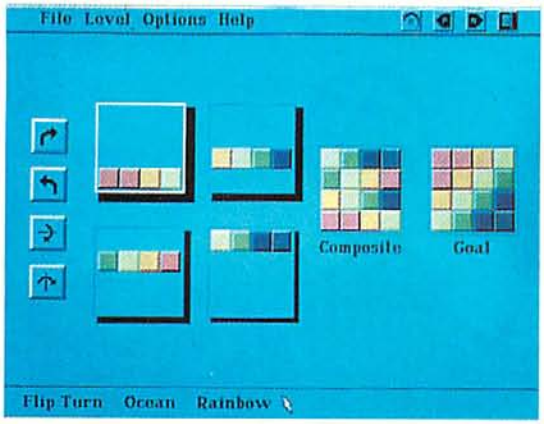
Illusion Profusion

The illusions are, perhaps, the heart of the game. There are 12 classes of them, with four levels per class, making for over six hundred puzzles in all. These puzzles are primarily exercises in perception and visualization. Many, though by no



means all, require putting blocks or tiles together to create a particular pattern or figure.

This is not always so simple as it sounds. Consider the Figure Ground illusions on the Desert level. Moving the red tiles uncovers black ones, moving the black ones uncovers white ones, and moving the white ones uncovers red ones again. Manipulating these tiles to form the required patterns definitely takes some thought.

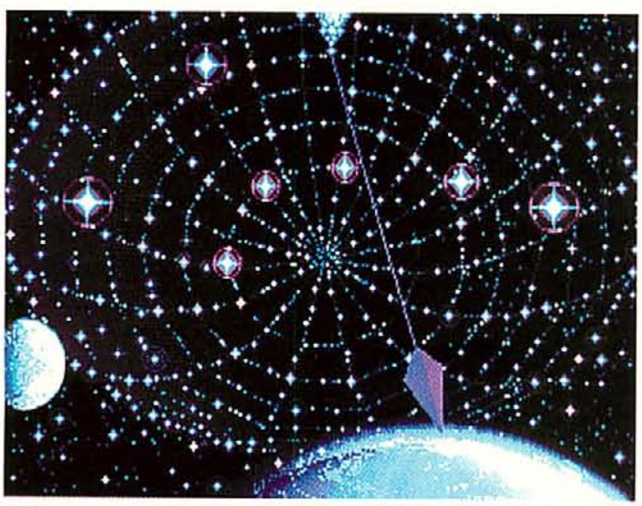


Heaven & Earth also has some unique puzzles, such as the Anti-Maze. Normally, in a regular maze, one moves through open spaces. In Anti-Maze, one can only move *through* the walls. There is also Identity Maze, where players maneuver several squares at once through a regular maze towards a goal, with the squares moving in different directions: as one (or more) go horizontally, the others move vertically.

The most eye-boggling (if not mind-boggling) set of puzzles are in the Concave/Convex section. Almost everyone is familiar with the shaded cubes that *seem* to go one way, then another. The constructions in this set are all based on that principle, which doesn't make the task any easier. Players can save their sanity by only solving these a few at a time.

A Journey Of A Thousand Miles...

The final section is the Pilgrimage. This is a journey of 108 steps, composed of occasional bits of Eastern wisdom interspersed among puzzles similar to the previous ones (pendulum, card game, and illusions), but specially created for the Pilgrimage alone, so there are no repeats.



Gamers can solve the Pilgrimage a bit at a time, going as far as they like and coming back to do more later. The game seamlessly remembers where the player left off. There is a special reward at the end when the Pilgrimage is completed.

The interface is mouse-driven (keyboard can be used) and simple to use. Graphics, at least the VGA graphics (MCGA, Tandy and EGA are also supported) were very good, being sharp and clear throughout the game.

In this day of bug-infested releases, it is a pleasure to relate that *Heaven & Earth* operated flawlessly each session. The program did not crash or do anything odd, nor was a separate boot disk necessary. It does take up about six meg on the hard drive, but compared to many products that require 15-20 meg or more, that's almost a drop in the bucket.

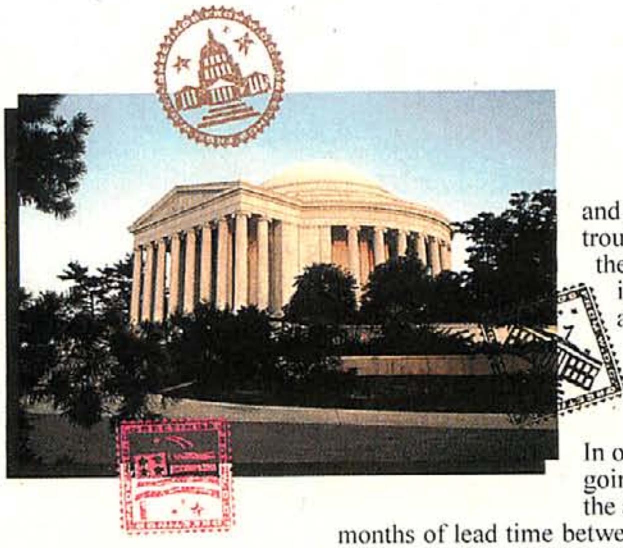
The manual is a little difficult to understand at first. The best thing is to pick something to work on, then refer back to the manual as needed. This will make things much clearer than just trying to read the manual alone.

If there is any quibble to be made about *Heaven & Earth*, it is the fact that, nice though it is, the card game doesn't quite fit into the Eastern theme. The pendulum can be seen as teaching the precepts of inner harmony, patience and control. The illusions are lessons in looking at things in different ways, expanding one's perception. The card game is, well, just a card game, with an emphasis on strategy and point-collecting, which seems a little out of place with the rest.

That, however, is really a minor quibble. Overall, *Heaven & Earth* is a terrific game for people who like puzzles, especially visual ones. There is more than enough here to keep one busy for quite some time and enough variety to keep things from becoming stale. Puzzle fans will certainly get more than their money's worth from this product. CGW

Mordred in the Land of Camelot

The Software Publishers Association and Mass Market Seduction



It depends on how one reads the legend whether it was Arthur or his half-sister who initiated the seduction in which Mordred was conceived. Most likely, it was a combination of Arthur's newly discovered virility and his half-sister's desire to have power over England's future king. It doesn't really matter which individual had designs on the other, the result of their incestuous union was Mordred, the bastard "nephew" who destroyed the dream.

As noted in *CGW*'s last report on the **Software Publishers Association**, there is a recurring emphasis on the mass market. We even called it a "holy grail" which many software publishers are seeking. We really can't blame the publishers for wanting a wider audience. We are enjoying seeing our audience grow, as well. We certainly can't blame the publishers for wanting their profits to grow. Yet, there still seems to be this seductive influence that causes some software executives to lose sight of their established market and take risks in trying to broaden that market, risks that one cannot imagine another executive in any other field being willing to take. The trend continued in the recent Fall Conference of the Software Publishers Association, held in Washington, D.C. during the last week of September.

Mass Market Channel Penetration

For example, the panel on penetrating the mass market featured a fascinating discussion by Casey Hughes of **Merisel Corporation.** Hughes cited the previous experiences of mass market merchandisers with software sales and observed that retailers are totally focused on getting the most return on investment out of the minimum space. He observed that consumer electronics outlets need a 29% margin in order to handle merchandise and suggested that computer software is, at most, a 19% margin situation. How then does one get one's wares before the crowds who purchase their electronics at such high volume dealerships? It is going to cost!

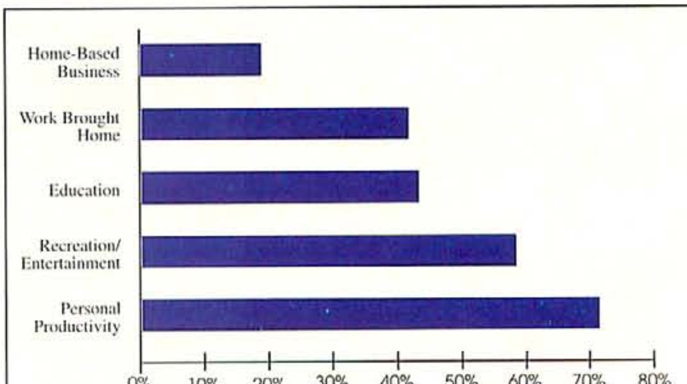
Where most MDF (Marketing Development Fund) programs are currently set at an extra 2% to 4% discount, which presumably gives software and computer stores to merchandise the products more effectively, Hughes said that publishers who wish to have a real impact in the consumer electronics market will have to put up closer to 10% in MDF discounts in order to get cooperation from such retailers. He went on to say that these retailers would get the margin they wanted, even if they had to charge it as fixture allowances, cooperative advertising, shrinkage, etc.

Later, in the same presentation, Jeff Abrams of **Best Buy** presented (in role-playing form) his version of a good product launch and a bad product launch. Frankly, we had trouble telling the difference between them. The distributor made a good point in his "bad" launch when he talked about a box that wouldn't fit on any retailer's shelf (a problem that we expect to get worse before the industry finally standardizes), but he confused the issue with his "good" launch. In order to make sure that there was really going to be product on the shelves when the ads came out, he was allotting two full months of lead time between his advertising plans and his street date. Further, he wasn't going to let the press see the product until it was on the shelves. That way, he reasoned, there would be an even playing field among reviewers and they would be reviewing final product. Finally, his advertising plan was directed at *real* consumer magazines that *real* consumers read.

Pardon us if we think his plan is a trifle naive. Even among computer magazines (and we turn issues around faster than most consumer magazines) there is a minimum lead time of three to four months. How was this ideal software publisher expecting to get his advertising placed in either computer or consumer magazines within two months? Also, if retailers are so concerned about "turns" per square foot (the way they allegedly measure sales), how are they going to feel about keeping a product on the shelf for the almost six months it would take this ideal software publisher (who doesn't believe in providing advance copies to the press) to get his product actually reviewed.

Finally, though we have an obvious interest in this question, reaching all those consumers in the *real* consumer magazines isn't

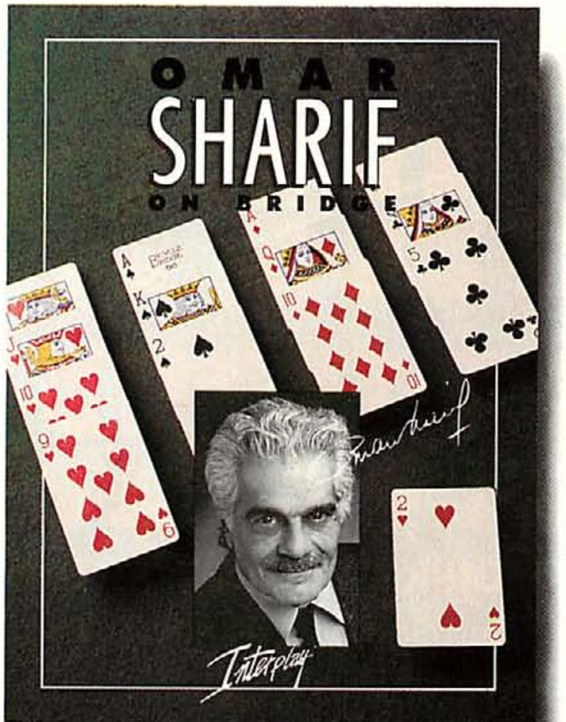
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Portions of PC-using households that use application category

Source: SPA Consumer Market Study

PLAY BRIDGE WITH THE MASTER HIMSELF





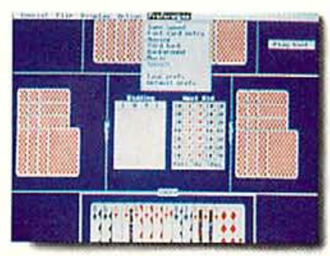
Omar Sharif On Bridge™

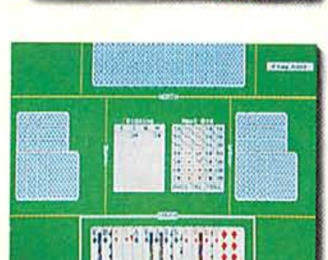
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MS-DOS Screens Pictured.

Circle Reader Service #164

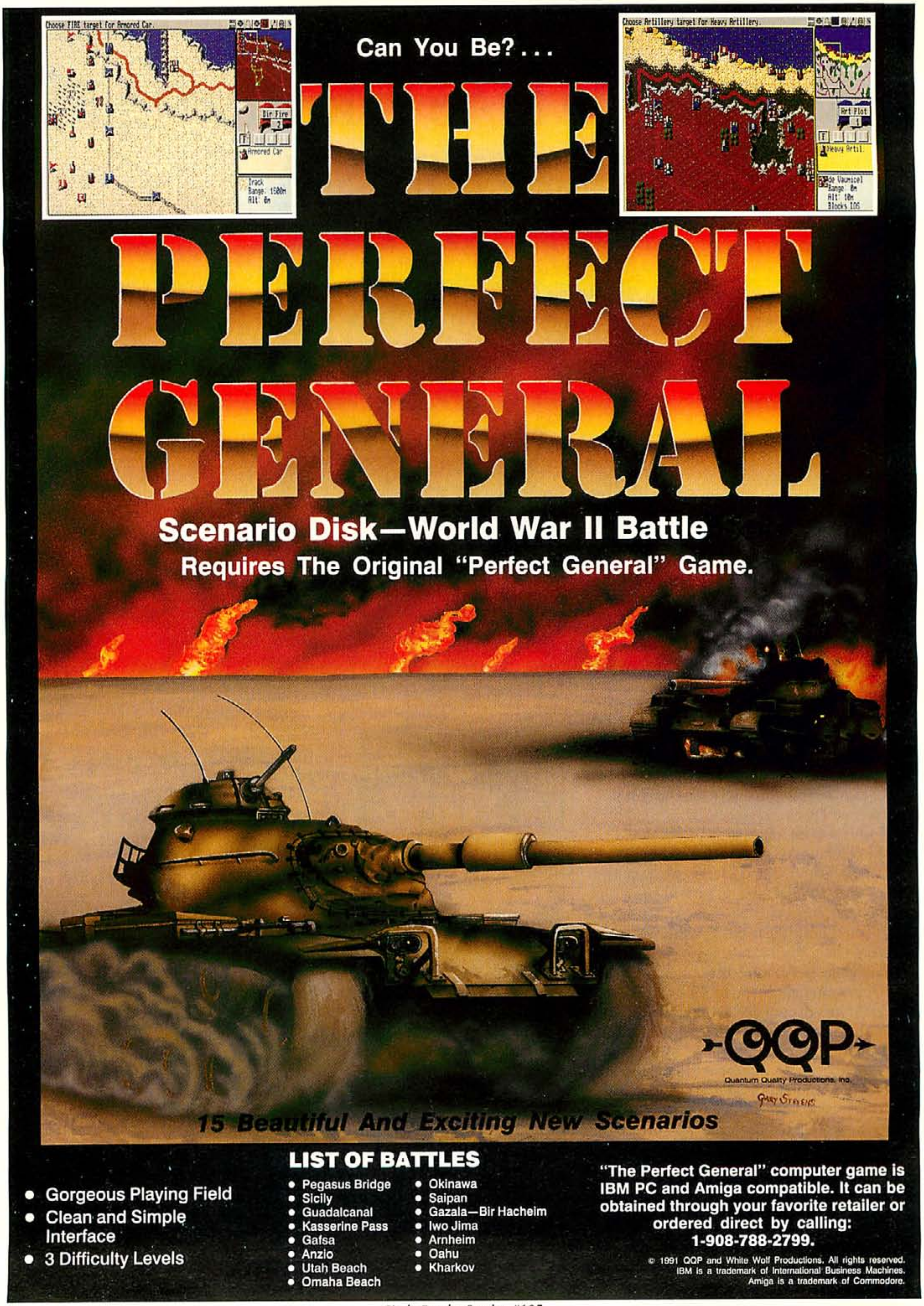
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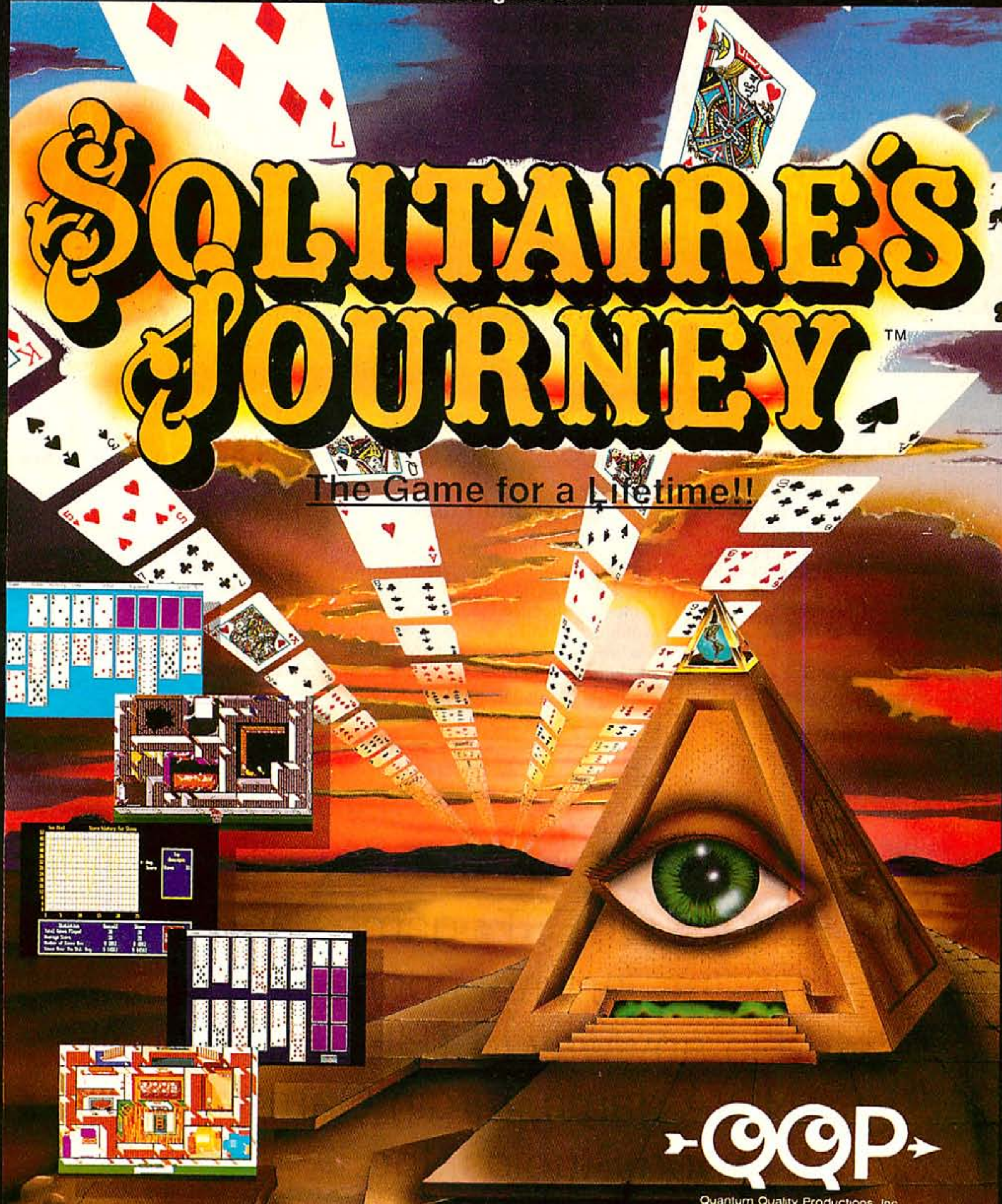
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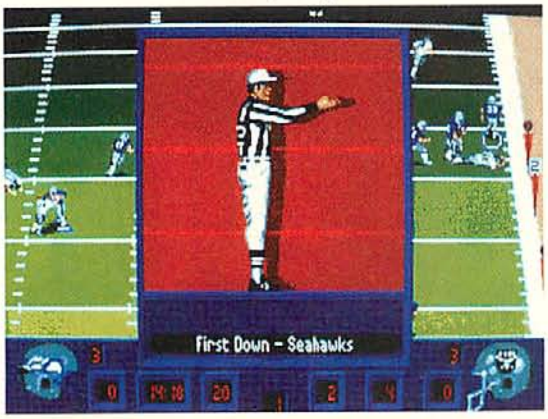
1-908-788-2799

(Continued from Page 46)
would appear to offer a valid learning tool, it is defeated by the graphics. Their caliber is such that as the ball-carrier is tackled, it often appears that a fumble has occurred. What has actually happened is that the graphics simply do not portray the action in sufficient detail to understand what has occurred.

Perhaps *JMF2*'s biggest weakness is defensive. One chooses the play, but has relatively little impact thereafter. *NFL* allows more player input and the ability to take charge of what is going on in the field.

There may be an "undocumented feature" in *JMF2*. While I was unable to duplicate it on a regular basis, the situation was third and long inside my own 20-yard line. A short pass up the middle went for two yards, insufficient for a first down. Obviously, a punting situation would be next, but lo and behold, the computer recognized the play as a touchdown. Talk about a quarterback sneak!

Finally, *JMF2*'s defensive coverage simply is not up to professional levels. An 8-10 yard pass play against a computer defense all too often breaks open for a 30-40 yard gain. The defensive secondary simply does not provide adequate coverage in the backfield.



NFL

Gains and Losses

Statistically, both programs offer statistical reports. However, *JMF2* allows one to print out the results in hard-copy, a much appreciated asset. While this would seem to be an insurmountable lead which *NFL* does not try to match, the latter program has its own benefit — the ability to play an entire season.

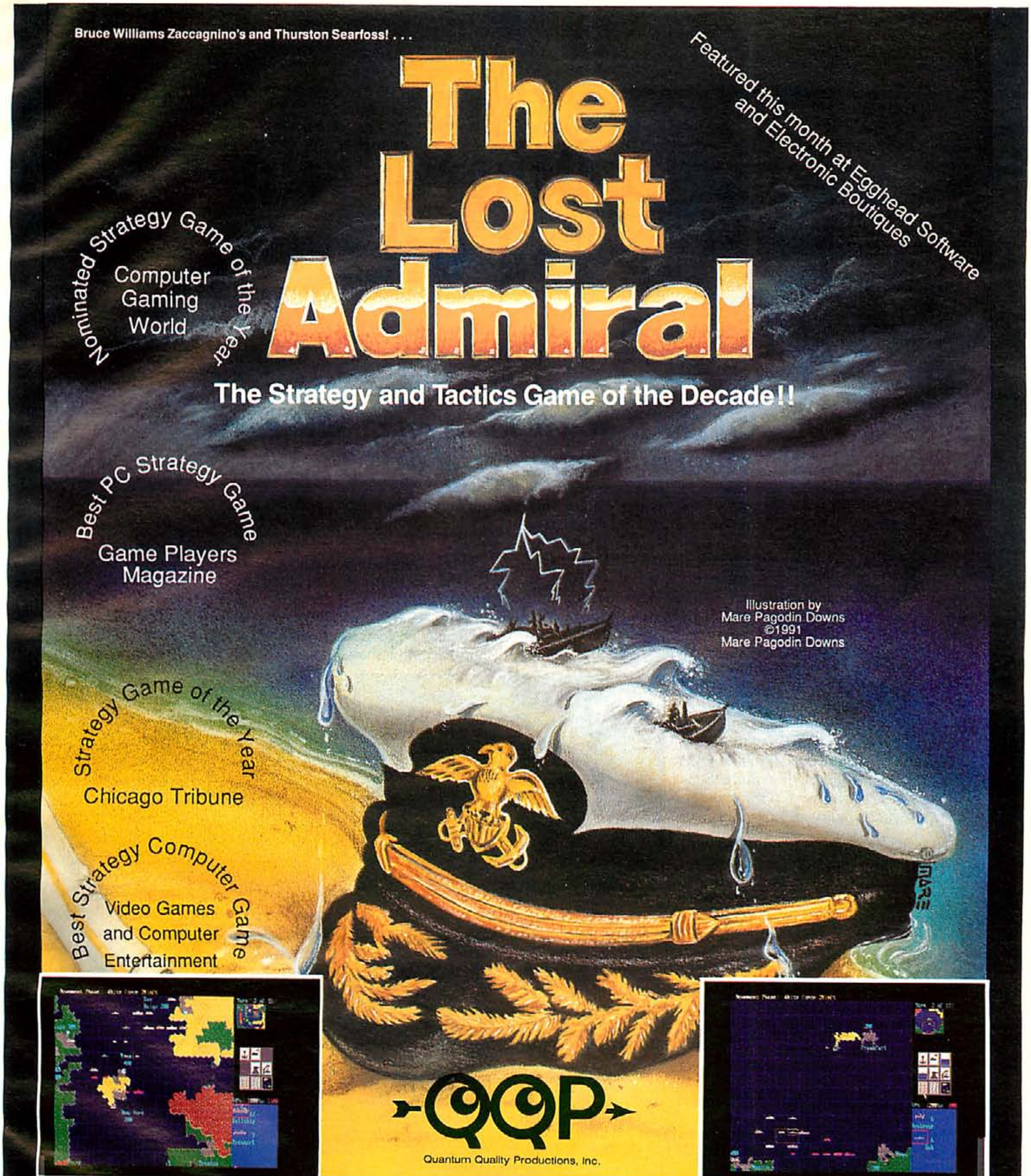
Surprisingly, *JMF2* is a game of one-time events; there is no continuity or season. This omission is difficult to understand and even harder to forgive. Granted, hard copy results are desired by the purist, but the ability to play over an entire season would seem a must. In addition to a complete season, *NFL* offers a draft and trading options plus competition leading all the way to the Super Bowl.

Both programs also offer "instant replay" options. Like the 1992 season, these cannot be used to overcome bad referees, but they do provide interesting options. *NFL* offers a normal and reverse angle view, while *JMF2* offers a standard view. Neither offers the flexibility of *Mike Ditka Ultimate Football* with its four separate angles.

End Game Analysis

As may be inferred, I would recommend *NFL* as the more interesting football simulation. It lacks John Madden's insights, but it more than makes up for this by a graphically pleasing program with a full season and a more detailed simulation.

With the ability to play both offense and defense, *NFL* simply outscores its opposition by a wide margin. CGW



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BEST OF THE REST

Other Worldly and Other Worlds

by Chuck Miller

Best Of The Rest will focus on quality games from non-commercial developers

With all the emphasis on technological advancements in the software entertainment industry, the tendency is to focus exclusively on the newest developments in the commercial game marketplace ruled by the entertainment giants. Generally, this is where the greatest strides in game technology and design take place. However, limiting one's focus in this way often leaves another deserving market entirely overlooked — that of the shareware game developers. This is truly an unfortunate situation, as many good (and very affordable) games are neglected, those created by individuals and design teams which, though small and struggling today, may become tomorrow's techno-wizards. A perfect example of this is **ID Software**'s *Wolfenstein 3D* (for more information, see the review in the September 1992 issue of *CGW*) and the games detailed below.



The Last Half of Darkness

Thus, beginning this issue, *CGW* will provide up-to-date information on game development in the shareware and public domain arena — a best of the rest column focusing on quality games from non-commercial developers. This area has been largely untapped by mainline computer gaming publications, resulting in a significant number of quality games remaining, for the most part, unnoticed, and their authors insufficiently supported to continue developing new products. Hopefully, *CGW* can help encourage and give recognition to this neglected source of try-before-you-buy entertainment and its dedicated authors.

A Haunting Experience

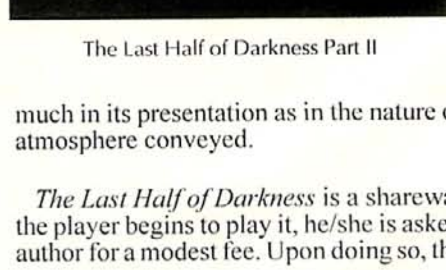
Aunt Martha has died and gone to her grave with a secret. A secret no one can live without! Now, the last half of darkness approaches…

The goal in *The Last Half of Darkness*, an adventure in the gothic horror tradition, is to uncover that secret. Of course, remaining alive is the key to that goal. As the story unfolds, the player stands before the ghostly mansion of his or her deceased aunt, a scholar in witchcraft and dark magic. Being her only living relative and heir to her estate, the player must now unravel the secrets locked up in her house.

This graphic adventure is reminiscent of those produced by **ICOM Simulations**, *Uninvited* in particular. Those who enjoyed *Uninvited* will certainly feel right at home with *Last Half*. Three main windows are provided for interaction with the game world: a location window, one for inventory and an "exit" window showing the directions open to the player. Also provided is a command list and dialogue box. Keyboard and mouse are both supported.

While EGA and CGA versions are available, the VGA version is definitely the one of choice. In addition to improved graphics, it features support for digitized sound (PC speaker, Covox Speech Thing and Sound Master II).

Overall, *Last Half* has a solid story line and logical puzzles, plus adequate graphics and sound. All contribute well to the game's atmosphere to provide a solid and enjoyable playing experience. Though not a threat to commercial games like *Elvira*, *Last Half* offers solid value for the price. The real fun and challenge of the game is not found as much in its presentation as in the nature of its puzzles and the atmosphere conveyed.



The Last Half of Darkness Part II

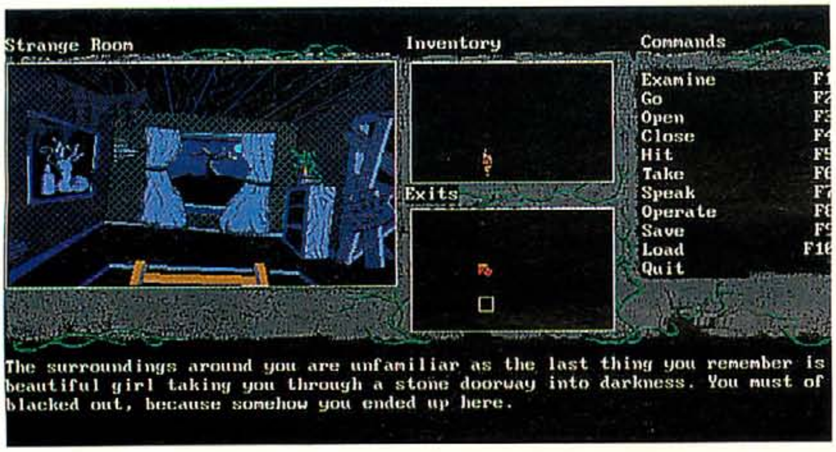
The Last Half of Darkness is a shareware adventure. When the player begins to play it, he/she is asked to register with the author for a modest fee. Upon doing so, the player will receive


History records the evolution of man's journey to the skies...
...Now you can relive it.
A-10 TANK KILLER
Red Baron
ACES OF THE PACIFIC
ACES OF THE PACIFIC
WWII: 1946
Red Baron
MISSION BUILDER
Blast your way through dangerous, low-level attacks. (RBMB)
Sink enemy ships with torpedoes and dive bombs – if you can. (Aces of the Pacific)
Hang on as enemy fire rips through your cockpit. (WWII: 1946)
Take on the great Axis and Allied aces in one-on-one duels. (Red Baron)
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an attractively packaged version of the sequel, The *Last Half of Darkness Part II* (the conclusion to this story) and a hint booklet for both parts. Purchasers need to be sure to indicate a choice of the CGA, EGA or VGA version, and send the registration fee of $20.00 by U.S. check or money order to:

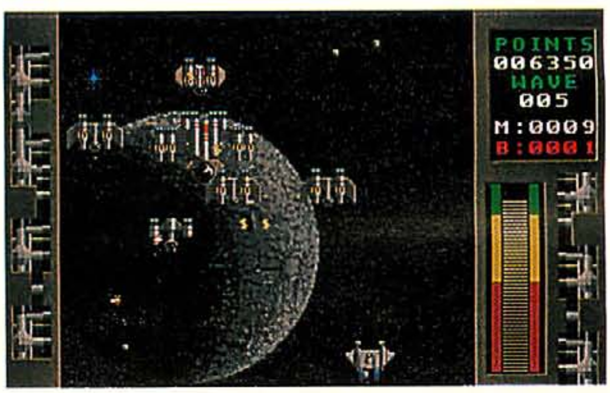
SoftLab Laboratories
2012 Gregory Street
San Diego, CA 92104
(619) 2-TERROR (Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm PST)

Additionally, *The Last Half of Darkness Part III* is also available from **SoftLab** for $39.95 (high density 5.25" disks, $41.95 on low density 5.25" disks), plus $3.00 shipping and handling. It features 256-color VGA graphics and supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards. Part III requires VGA, 640K and a hard drive.



The Last Half of Darkness Part III

This sequel will appeal mostly to those who enjoy a good horror mystery. The version we had was still in final beta and exhibited some glitches. However, it does have potential and should provide numerous hours of haunting play. Just don't expect state-of-the-art graphics and sound. Like its predecessors, the strong point of this adventure is its play and atmosphere.

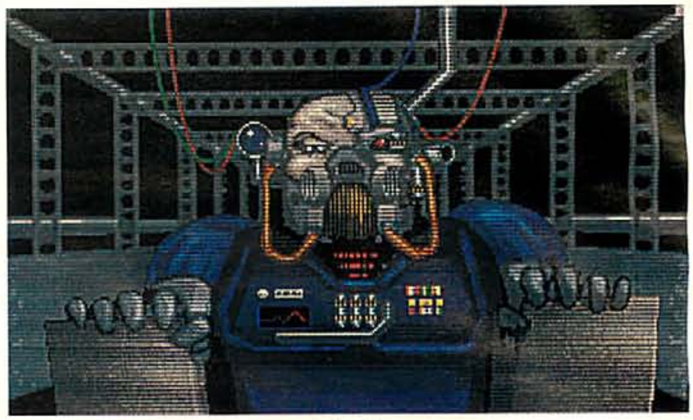


Galactix

Missiles, Megabombs and More

The first in what we hope is a long line of game releases from **Cygnus Software** is *Galactix*, a space arcade game reminiscent of a cross between *Galaga* and *Space Invaders*. In its current version (1.1), *Galactix* sports superb 256-color VGA graphics and super smooth animation, plus an exceptional soundtrack and digitized sounds for those with an Ad Lib or Sound Blaster sound card.

As the story goes, Earth is under attack by the vicious Xidus armada. Armed with only one Epsilon-class Interceptor, the player must defend wave after wave of the relentless Xidus fighters. At his or her disposal, the Interceptor's pilot has Molecular Displacement Shielding, Thermal Burst Missiles, Tactical Nuke Smart Bombs, a Manipular Hydraulic Arm (with Claw), Particle Accelerator Cannons, Comfortable Re-



Galactix

clining Leather Bucket Seats and an ACME Toothpick Dispenser.

As mentioned previously, the graphics and audio are exceptional in this commercial-quality space shoot'em up. It is, in fact, better than some so called commercial offerings. Game control is smooth and crisp with the use of a joystick. Keyboard and mouse/trackball are also supported, as is a combination of the above input devices. *Galactix* requires 640K, a 286/10MHz or better system, a hard drive, VGA, and an Ad Lib or Sound Blaster sound card for music, and Sound Blaster for digitized sounds and voice.

Galactix is a fully-functional shareware game with a very modest registration fee of $15.00, gaining the registered user both the latest version on disk and a clear conscience. **Cygnus** will also donate $1.00 of the registration fee to help save the rain forests. To receive a registered version of *Galactix*, send a U.S. check or money order to:

Cygnus Software
Suite 309, 98 W. 63rd Street,
Willowbrook, IL 60514.

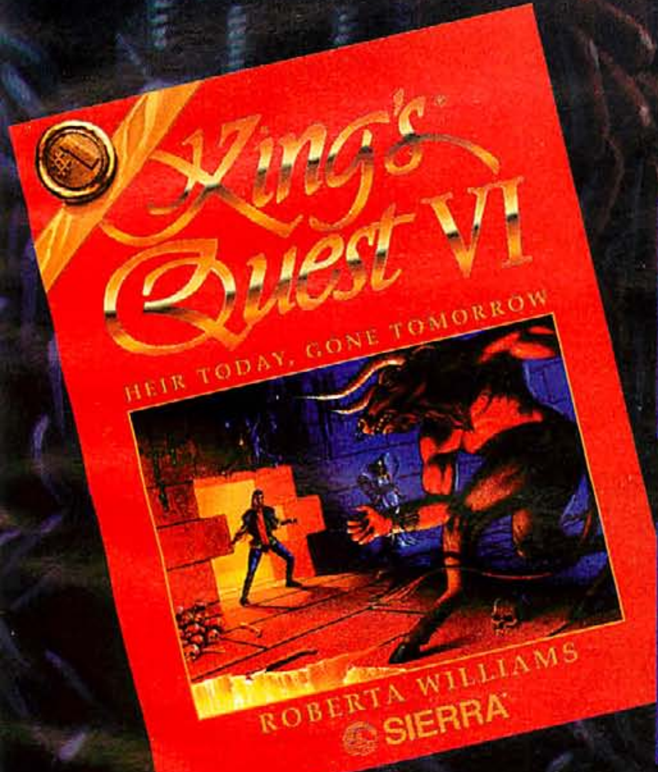
Games reviewed in this column are available through numerous distributors of shareware and public domain software, as well as on many national and private telecommunication services. If you do not have access to these services, you can, in most cases, write or call the game developer for an evaluation copy.

Send Us Your Best

If you have authored a shareware or public domain game and would like to have it considered for review in this column, please send two complete copies of your game to:

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Computer Gaming World
Attn: Chris Lombardi
130 Chaparral Court, Suite 260
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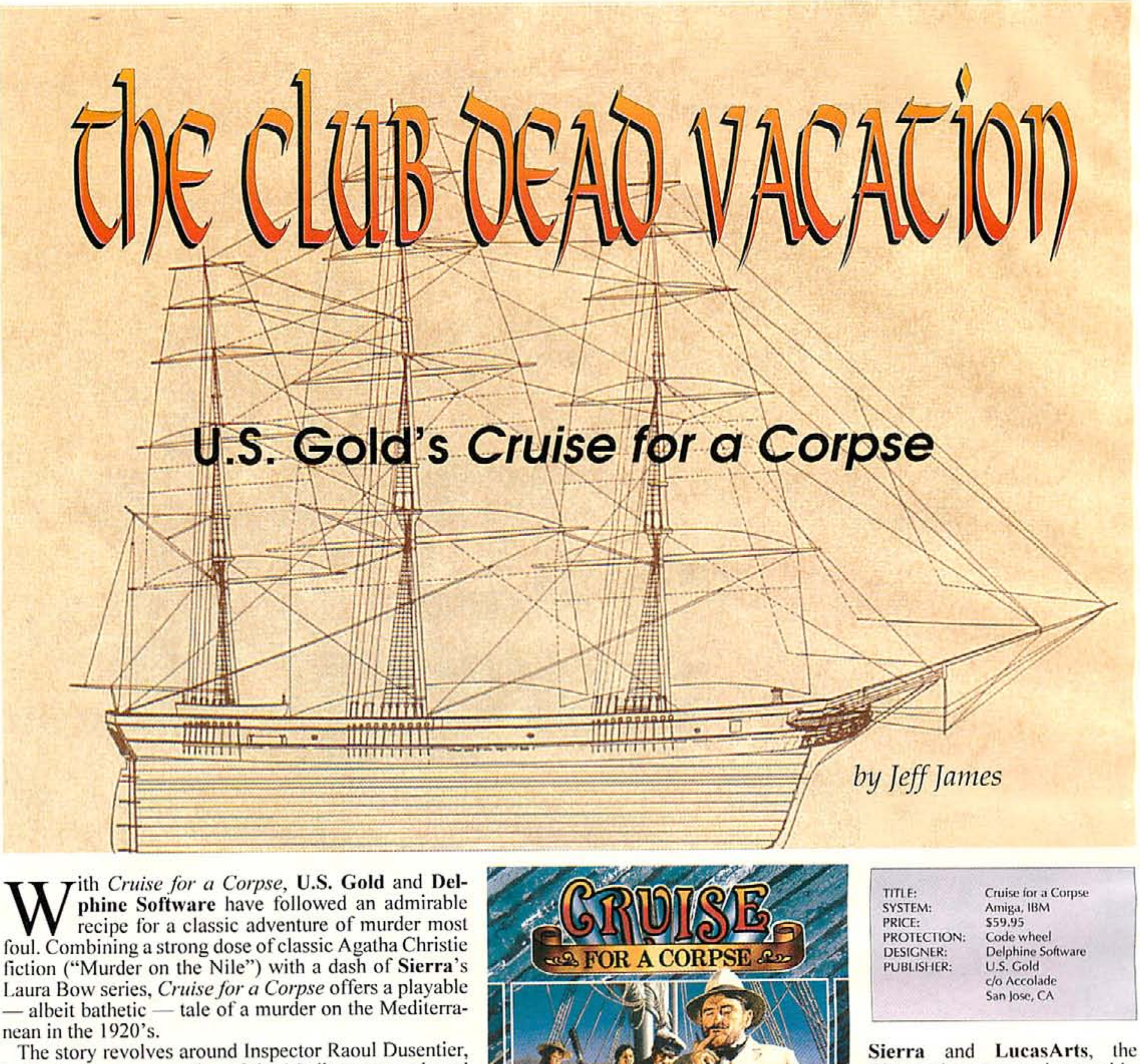
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The Club Dead Vacation

U.S. Gold's *Cruise for a Corpse*



by Jeff James

With *Cruise for a Corpse*, **U.S. Gold** and **Delphine Software** have followed an admirable recipe for a classic adventure of murder most foul. Combining a strong dose of classic Agatha Christie fiction ("Murder on the Nile") with a dash of **Sierra**'s Laura Bow series, *Cruise for a Corpse* offers a playable — albeit bathetic — tale of a murder on the Mediterranean in the 1920's.

The story revolves around Inspector Raoul Dusentier, invited on a dream cruise of the Mediterranean aboard the Karaboudjan III, a restored sailing vessel owned by the wealthy Nikolas Karaboudjan. Soon after the French Inspector's arrival, a panicky butler leads him to Mr. Karaboudjan's study, where the lifeless body of Mr. Karaboudjan is found. Before the Inspector can begin to perform his investigation, an unseen stranger knocks the Inspector unconscious. Awaking to a throbbing head amidst the wrecked furniture of the study, the Inspector finds that his host's corpse has disappeared. The player enters the adventure at this point, guiding Inspector Dusentier about the ship searching for evidence and clues.

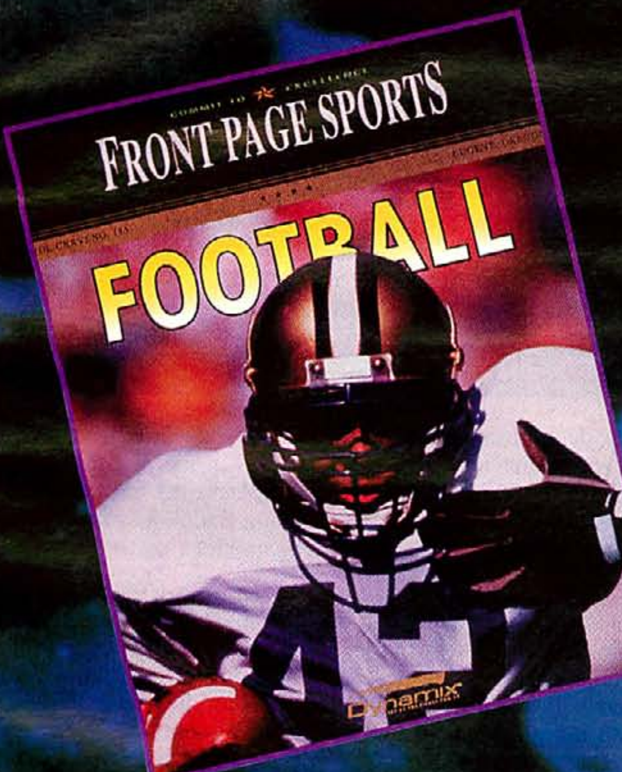


TITLE:	Cruise for a Corpse
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	Code wheel
DESIGNER:	Delphine Software
PUBLISHER:	U.S. Gold c/o Accolade San Jose, CA

Assisting in this sleuthing endeavor is Delphine's "Cinematique" playing interface, used in other Delphine productions such as *James Bond: The Stealth Affair* and *Future Wars*. Although it lacks the polish of the point-and-click interfaces from **Sierra** and **LucasArts**, the Cinematique system is not without its merits. Only the left and right mouse buttons are needed; the left moves Raoul about and selects objects, while the right displays a list of currently carried items. Using a combination of the two allows the manipulation of objects, such as inserting keys in locks, using a hammer *on* a nail, et cetera.

Soon after Inspector Dusentier awakes from his cudgel-induced slumber, the task of finding the murderer — and perhaps more importantly, the missing corpse — is underway. The player has only 10 hours to find the murderer, from 8:00 A.M., when the Inspector awakes, to 6:00 P.M., when

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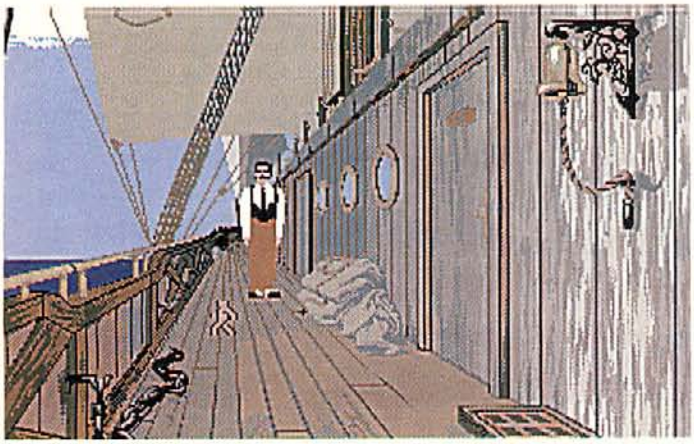
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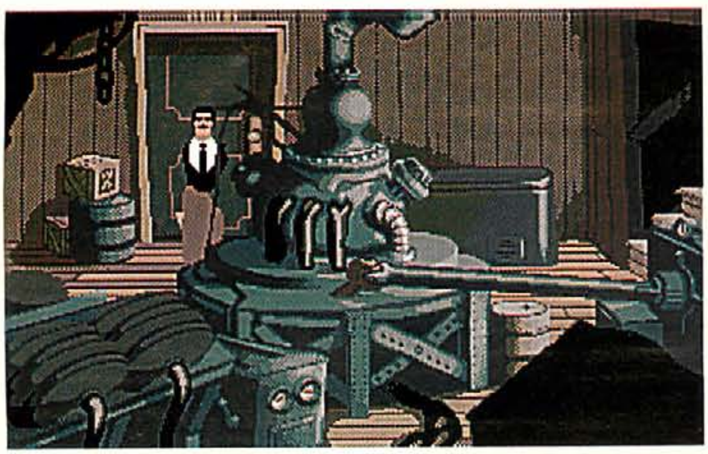
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the identity of the murderer must be revealed to the captain. Beginning in the study, the player must guide the Inspector through the two dozen locations spread across the four decks of the Karaboudjan III, searching for clues and grilling suspects. Most of the on-screen action is represented in a typical adventure game fashion, with the player's alter ego moving from location to location, searching for objects. Conversing with characters in-



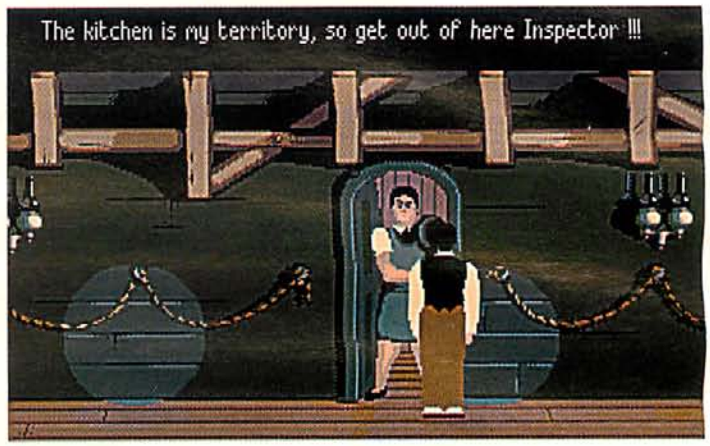
volves a separate conversation screen, with close-ups of Inspector Dusentier and the current suspect, flanked by a list of topics. Selecting a topic elicits an appropriate response from the suspect, complete with unique facial gestures, head movements and other small but effective ancillary movements. Although a far cry from a full-blown parser (such as in the **Infocom** adventures), the dialogue system used in *Cruise* provides a surprising amount of flexibility. Time is the player's greatest enemy; fortunately, Time only advances after an important piece of evidence has been found or an important bit of dialogue has been heard. An on-screen clock then appears and visibly advances a few minutes, serving as both a barometer to the player's success while simultaneously imparting a sense of urgency.



The influence of other Delphine games — particularly *Out of this World* — can be seen in the movement of game characters. Inspector Dusentier walks with the smooth, fluid gait reminiscent of the rotoscoped polygon animation used in *Out of this World*. In addition to the smooth animation of moving characters, this animation technique produces some impressive effects. For example, walking the Inspector from one end of the ship's upper deck to the other requires that the Inspector walk towards the player's viewpoint, filling up the screen as he smoothly approaches. The scene then cuts to the Inspector's retreating back as the other end of the deck is displayed. Other characters in the game exhibit similar animated characteristics, moving about in their seats, smoking cigarettes and so on.

As intriguing as Cruise's storyline is, however, several foibles hinder the program from achieving its true potential. The first problem occurs even before the game is loaded — the copy protection is simply atrocious. Getting past this copy protection involves matching up an alphanumeric code displayed on the screen with one on the included code wheel, then entering the correct sequence of colored pictures from the wheel into the program. What's more, not only must the player successfully bypass the copy protection *twice*, but s/he must also deal with the poorly aligned codewheel which makes mistakes infuriatingly easy to make.

Cruise also suffers from a decidedly mediocre treatment of graphics. In an era of verdant VGA palettes and lushly illustrated characters, *Cruise* bucks the trend and uses 16-color EGA graphics. Of course, it *is* an older game in Europe. The interface has its share of foibles as well. For example, opening the closet door on



the lower deck places our good Inspector squarely between the player's viewpoint and that of the objects in the closet — the Inspector serves admirably as a door, but lacks the transparency to successfully emulate a window. Moving Raoul out of the way causes him to politely close the door, again blocking the player's view.

With *Cruise*, **U.S. Gold** and **Delphine** set out to create an enjoyable murder mystery in the classic Agatha Christie fashion. For the most part, they've succeeded. The story is interesting, the characters believable, and the central character, Inspector Dusentier, is an intriguing amalgam of Agatha Christie's redoubtable Hercule Poirot, Conan Doyle's Sherlock and Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer. Having a 19th Century sailing vessel as a backdrop kills two design bugbears with the same dose of arsenic; it limits the playing area to a manageable size and infuses the story with one of the best story settings in the murder mystery genre.

Cruise does have it's share of problems: the aggravating copy protection, lackluster EGA-quality graphics and the occasionally obtuse interface thwart the true potential of this program. Dedicated whodunit aficionados may find much to like in the story and setting of *Cruise For A Corpse*, although the general adventure gaming audience may find it a rather tedious journey through stagnant gaming waters. CGW

Aces Takes Off ... *Finally*

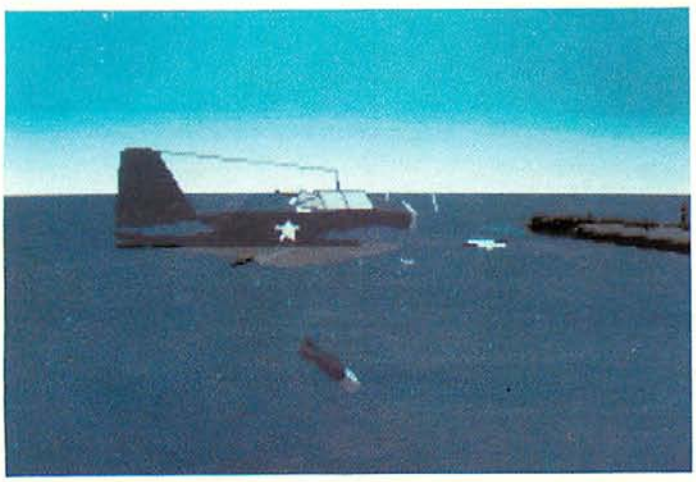
By Doug Fick

As originally released, *Aces of the Pacific* was a letdown from the expectations generated by the immensely popular *Red Baron*. Fortunately, when a few consumer test pilots got on the case, **Dynamix** quickly realized that the program needed to be tuned up in order to hit on all 18 cylinders (Pratt and Whitney Double Wasp radial, of course). Now, all consumer pilots can rest easy. The mechanics from Eugene have this beauty purring like a 2000 horsepower kitten.

Problem One: Stalling Engine (Slow Game Speed)

Game speed has been improved significantly by program tightening and dropping the level of background detail during combat. The frame rate has jumped from unplayably slow to a noticeable, but not too bothersome, slowdown during the heaviest fighting. The only times the program really bogs down is during multiple aircraft dogfights (10 aircraft or so, depending on the speed of the computer) and when flying low over large ships and airfields.

Don't think Dynamix merely yanked out tons of graphics in order to increase speed, however. They added flak, both small and large calibre around all targets (and lots of it). Lost an engine? Not to worry, just step out and walk home on the erupting AAA fireballs, it's that thick!

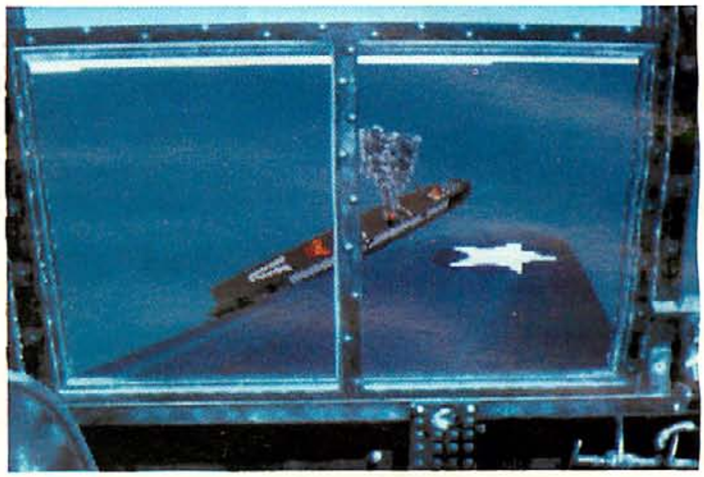


Problem Two: Faulty Steering (Weak Computer Opponents)

The computer opponents have improved immensely since their first foray against consumer aces. The original program presented adversaries in a "Turkey Shoot" fashion. I could almost hear the carnival pitchman shouting "Step right up, six kills for a dollar!" No more! I found myself working hard to bring home one or two per sortie. Gone are the days of camping behind an enemy aircraft, waiting for the perfect shot, knowing his buddies were too stupid to chase you off. Just as in *Red Baron*, quick snap shots and aggressive checking of one's six is called for. In fact, with the increased level of intelligence and larger number of aircraft involved in some of the dogfights, *Aces* may now provide a much better feeling of being in a 'furball' than *Red Baron* ever did.

Problem Three: Clunky Transmission (Inaccurate Aircraft Performance)

The single advantage which most Japanese aircraft possessed during WWII was the ability to out turn their American rivals. As originally released, *Aces* took the one Japanese trump card away. By compressing turning performance, the game prohibitively favored the American fighters. In the new release, the player may well be dismayed to see those Zeros regularly clawing around onto their tail. Of course, this change is a great boon to play balance and realism, making the simulation far more challenging and enjoyable.



Problem Four: Shorting Stereo (Weak Sound Support)

With a total rewrite of all sound effects, the game now soars in the audio department. Everything from exploding flak to different pitches for radial and in-line engines is well done. The only area sound support isn't superior to *Red Baron* is when the player's aircraft is being used as a target sleeve. It's still a little hard to tell what aircraft in the furball is being peppered.

Problem Five: Crazed Windshield (limited view modes)

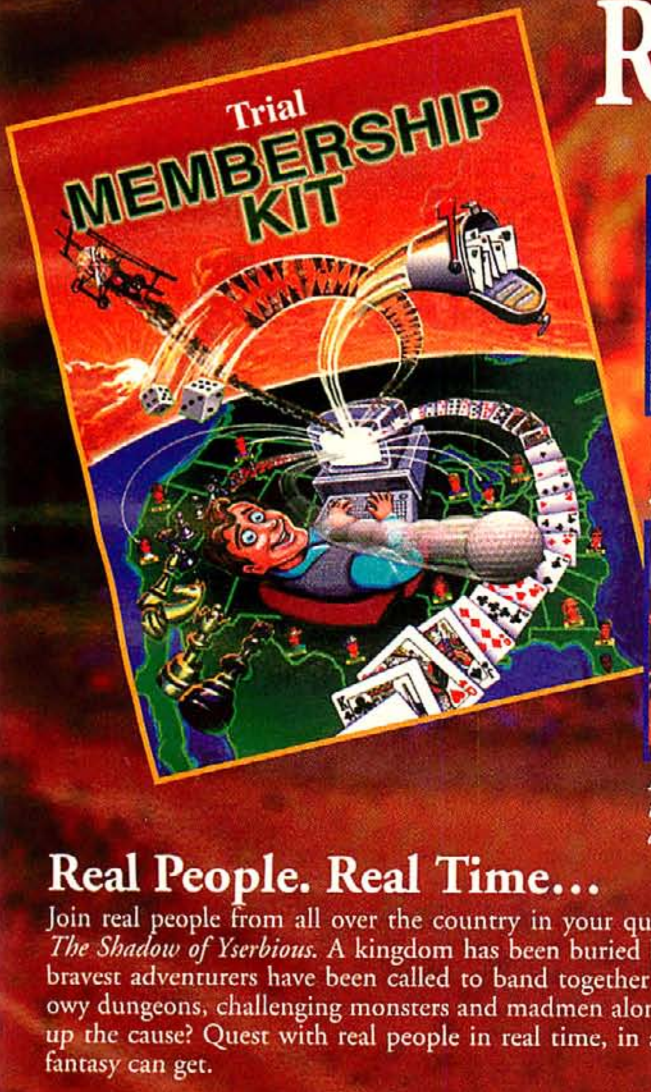
Well, I can't have everything. *Red Baron* and *Aces of the Pacific* both leave me feeling like I'm looking at combat through a soda straw. The different view modes just cover too small a patch of sky. Perhaps, an expansion disk or the forthcoming *Aces Over Europe* will address this problem.

Off the Rack (Conclusion)

As updated, *Aces of the Pacific* lives up to its tremendous advanced billing and is now superior to *Red Baron* in almost every category. After a shaky couple of months, Dynamix should feel confident in the future of their *Great Warplanes Series*. CGW

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It was a Dark and Stormy Knight...

A Player's Guide to Darklands

by Samuel B. Baker II

DARKLANDS is a game of wide scope and possibilities. This is evident from the start in the rich character creation system, as a new player wanting to make the most of his initial four characters will spend several hours creating the first party of adventures.

Making the Most of it

Different family histories provide advantages to particular career paths. For example, the easiest way to become a knight is to be nobly born. In addition to the skill benefits a character gets from different "births," there is also a penalty — the higher born a character is, the fewer points one has to increase his or her basic stats. Since these basic stats seldom change for the better during play, it is often best to take the lowest birth one can and aim for the position one desires. The following chart will the physical effects of a character's family background. The experience points on this table are those used to increase the character's basic stats, so they are especially valuable.



During a character's first career, there is a bonus of +2 added to *every* skill. There is also an additional pot of 20 experience points added to the normal total for this first profession. During the next tour, there is a bonus of five EPs added to the pool.

It is evident from experimentation that there are increasingly severe penalties for extended careers, particularly since characters age as time passes in the game. With the possible exception of the character one chooses as healer, a character should begin adventuring at 30 to avoid any pregame age penalties. The following table lists the potential penalties for getting a late start in life. The parenthetical numbers show the cumulative loss of points.

Bishop Stroganoff

Start with a stock of noble birth. Add experience points to stats until perception, intelligence and charisma are at least 25. Distribute other points as desired. Add one cup noble heir, one cup abbot and one cup bishop. Bring to a roiling boil and cook for 30 years. Season with EPs to taste, paying particular attention to the religious and speaking skills. Remove and set aside to adventure. Serves a party of four. Enjoy!

Strength and Endurance: These stats keep a character alive, so one should make them as high as possible. Also, a high strength will allow the character to wear heavier armor and carry larger weapons. Generally, one should eschew careers that put a divot in these two stats, such as abbot.

Agility: One character in the party should have a high agility. Occasionally, it will be necessary to climb walls and such, and agility also helps characters stay hidden while they sneak.

Perception: One character should have good perception. This character should also have a high artifice skill. The person to nominate for trap detector is the alchemist. This fellow will be your party leader in indoor fights, so bear this in mind when creating him or her.

Intelligence: The alchemist will need all the brains he can manage, as it is essential for success in creating potions. A country commoner background is almost a must for this character since it provides the most development points.

Charisma: Obviously, this is the core characteristic of the "people person." The most charismatic character should be the party spokesperson (the party leader) when outdoors and have high values in Speak Common, Speak Latin, and Read and Write skills.

Party Favors

I put together my current party as so:
two noble birth peasant/noble heir/knights (good Religion and Virtue, high strength [40] and endurance [41]); one country commoner novice/ monk/ priest (charisma of 42, Religion, Virtue and Speak Common of 37); one country commoner oblate/ student/ physician/ hermit/ hermit.

This last fellow is 40 years old, but this was the only way I found to get a healing skill of 45 at the start. The nearest I could get to that number in four terms is 44 for healing. That one point of skill is the difference between healing at two points a day and healing three points per day. This fellow is interesting in that he starts out with two saints, one formula and the highest virtue (47) of the lot. He also has decent alchemy and artifice skills. Needless to say, he's on point indoors. If I had to do it over again (and I will as soon as I get my hands on version .6), I would make one of my characters female. Most likely, I would make her my healer/mine detector or people person, since they have the highest virtue, and there are many saints that work better for women, and at least one (Agnes) who *only* works for women.

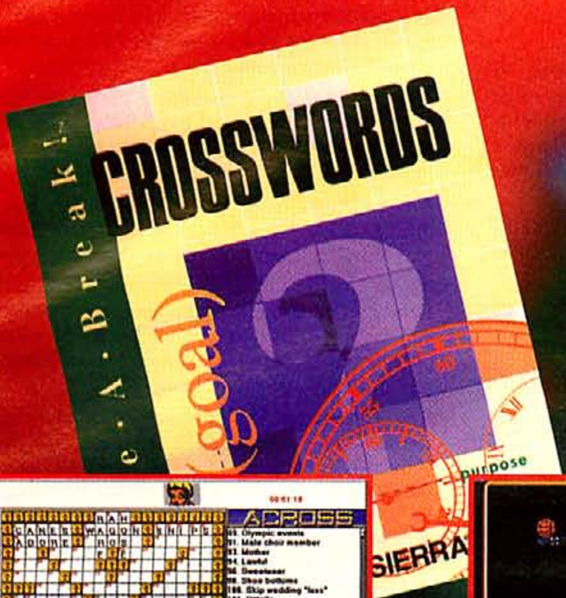
When assigning skill points, don't put any points into any weapons skill (except missile devices) until every point possible has been spent on the non-weapon skills. The weapons

Table of Birth Benefits/Penalties

	Nobility	Wealthy Urban	Town Trades	Country Crafts	Urban Commoners	Country Commoners
Endurance	-	-1	-1	-	-	+1
Strength	-	-	-1	-	+1	+1
Agility	-	-	-	+1	+1	+1
Perception	-	+1	+1	-	-	-
Intelligence	-	+1	+2	+1	-1	-
Charisma	-	-	-	-	-1	-1

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Aging Effects Chart

Age	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65
End	-1 (-1)	-2 (-3)	-2 (-5)	-3 (-8)	-3 (-11)	-3 (-14)	-5 (-16)	-6 (-22)
Str	-1 (-1)	-1 (-2)	-2 (-4)	-2 (-6)	-2 (-8)	-3 (-11)	-4 (-15)	-6 (-21)
Agl	-1 (-1)	-2 (-3)	-2 (-5)	-2 (-7)	-3 (-10)	-3 (-13)	-4 (-17)	-4 (-21)
Per	—	—	—	-1 (-1)	-1 (-2)	2 (-4)	-3 (-7)	-3 (-10)
Int	—	—	—	—	—	-1 (-1)	-2 (-3)	-2 (-5)
Chr	—	—	—	-1 (-1)	-1 (-2)	-2 (-4)	-3 (-7)	-3 (-10)

skills will advance quite rapidly through their use in combat.

All the skills are used in the game to one extent or another. As in life, some skills are "more equal" than others. Religion is used to recharge the religious batteries (i.e., divine favor). Speak Latin and Read/Write are used when attending mass or talking to church figures, alchemists, physicians and the university, so the "hail fellow well met" guy or gal should get boosts here. It is possible to get through the entire game without an alchemist type and without an adept Artificer. However, it will get expensive having to continually buy potions, and there is always a need for Eater Water potions.

Most of the time, Stealth and Streetwise are not important, and the penalty for failure will be more fighting (and usually loot, hehe). One character should have high numbers in these areas and Woodwise for those special occasions when it *really* matters (unless one doesn't mind attracting the kind attentions of the witch's sabbat!) Ride is used mostly for escape, and the whole party needs to pass the check to succeed. There is at least one instance where having a high Ride and Polearm skill together might be useful. One good healer is all that a party needs; the higher, the better. For the first 29 points of Healing skill, the healing rate is 1 per day. At 30, the rate is 2 per day. At 15 point intervals thereafter, the healing rate improves by one.

Professional Matters

There are 35 professions. Most of the religious and alchemical professions grant characters a saint or formula. However, the formula or saint is determined randomly and if it duplicates one already awarded, the saint or formula award is lost. Some occupations give extra attribute bonuses and some penalize a character, though characters will not receive any strength or endurance benefits or detriments after the age of 40. Though a character may be eligible for more occupations, only the 14 highest stature occupations are available at any one time. Here follows a list of their benefits and penalties.

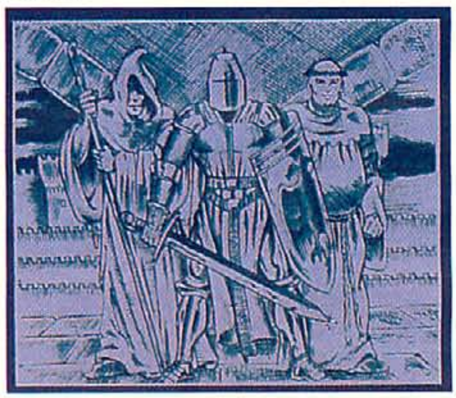
Recruit: +1 to strength and endurance, and 18 extra EPs that may be applied anywhere. The character must be 25 years old or younger. Occupation may only be chosen once.

Soldier: 18 extra EPs. The character must have been a recruit, veteran, captain, knight, schulz or bandit.

Veteran: +1 to strength and endurance. -1 to charisma. 21 extra EPs. The character must have been a soldier, veteran, captain or knight.

Captain: +1 to intelligence and charisma. -1 to endurance. 17 free EPs. The character must have a minimum of 20 in perception, intelligence and charisma, and must have been a veteran, captain, knight, schulz, courtier, manorial lord or bishop.

Hunter: +1 to endurance, agility and intelligence. -1 to strength. 20 extra EPs. The character must have a Woodwise skill of 15 or more, must either be age 15 from a noble or rural family, or have been a recruit, soldier, veteran, captain, knight, friar, hermit, peddler, traveling merchant, peasant, schulz, hunter or bandit.



Bandit: +1 to endurance and agility. -1 to charisma and virtue. 22 free EPs. The character must either be 15, or have been a recruit, soldier, veteran, captain, knight, peasant, hunter, friar, hermit, schulz, peddler, laborer, thief, bandit, vagabond or swindler.

Peasant: +1 to strength and endurance. -1 to intelligence. 28 free EPs. Characters may always be a peasant unless they are 15 and of noble or wealthy birth, or have just been a schulz, captain, knight, courtier, noble heir, priest, journeyman craftsman, traveling merchant, professor or alchemist, or have *ever* been a person of high place: manorial lord, abbot, bishop, merchant-proprietor, master alchemist or master craftsman.

Village Schulz: +1 to intelligence and charisma. 24 extra EPs. The character must have been a peasant and a veteran, captain, noble heir, knight, manorial lord, priest, abbot, bishop, merchant-proprietor, professor or schulz.

Noble Heir: +1 to intelligence and charisma. -1 to perception. 21 free EPs. The character must have been of noble birth or have been a courtier.

Courtier: +1 to perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 to strength. 12 additional EPs. The character must be 15 and from a noble or wealthy family, or have recently been a schulz, captain, knight, priest, abbot or bishop or have *ever* been a manorial lord or courtier.

Knight: +1 to strength, endurance and agility. 16 extra EPs. The character must have a virtue of 16+ and be a noble of age 20+ or have just been a captain, courtier, noble heir, abbot or bishop, or have *ever* been a knight or manorial lord.

Manorial Lord: +1 to intelligence. +2 to charisma. -1 to strength. 16 free EPs. The character must have been a manorial lord or have spent the previous ten years as a noble heir, courtier, abbot and/or bishop.

Hermit: +1 to strength, endurance and perception. -1 to charisma. 20 extra EPs. Gets one saint. The character must have a virtue of 15 or more.

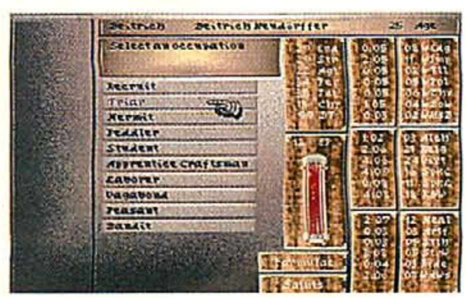
Novice Monk/Nun: +1 to intelligence. 23 additional EPs. No saint awarded. A character may only be a novice once and may not have previously had a higher religious rank.

Friar: +1 to strength and charisma. -1 to perception. Only 12 free EPs. Plus one saint. The character must be male and have been a hermit, novice, monk, priest, abbot or bishop.

Priest: +1 to perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 to strength. 23 extra EPs. Plus one saint. The character must be male and have been a manorial lord, priest, abbot or bishop, or have just been a noble heir, courtier, schulz, monk, clerk or professor, or have spent the last ten years as a combination of one or more of the following: novice, oblate, student or friar.

Abbot: +1 to perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 strength and endurance. 23 free EPs. Two saints awarded. The character must have a perception, intelligence and charisma of 20 or more, Religion of 15 or more, and just been a noble heir, courtier, manorial lord, priest, abbot or bishop, or spent the last 10 years as a monk and/or professor.

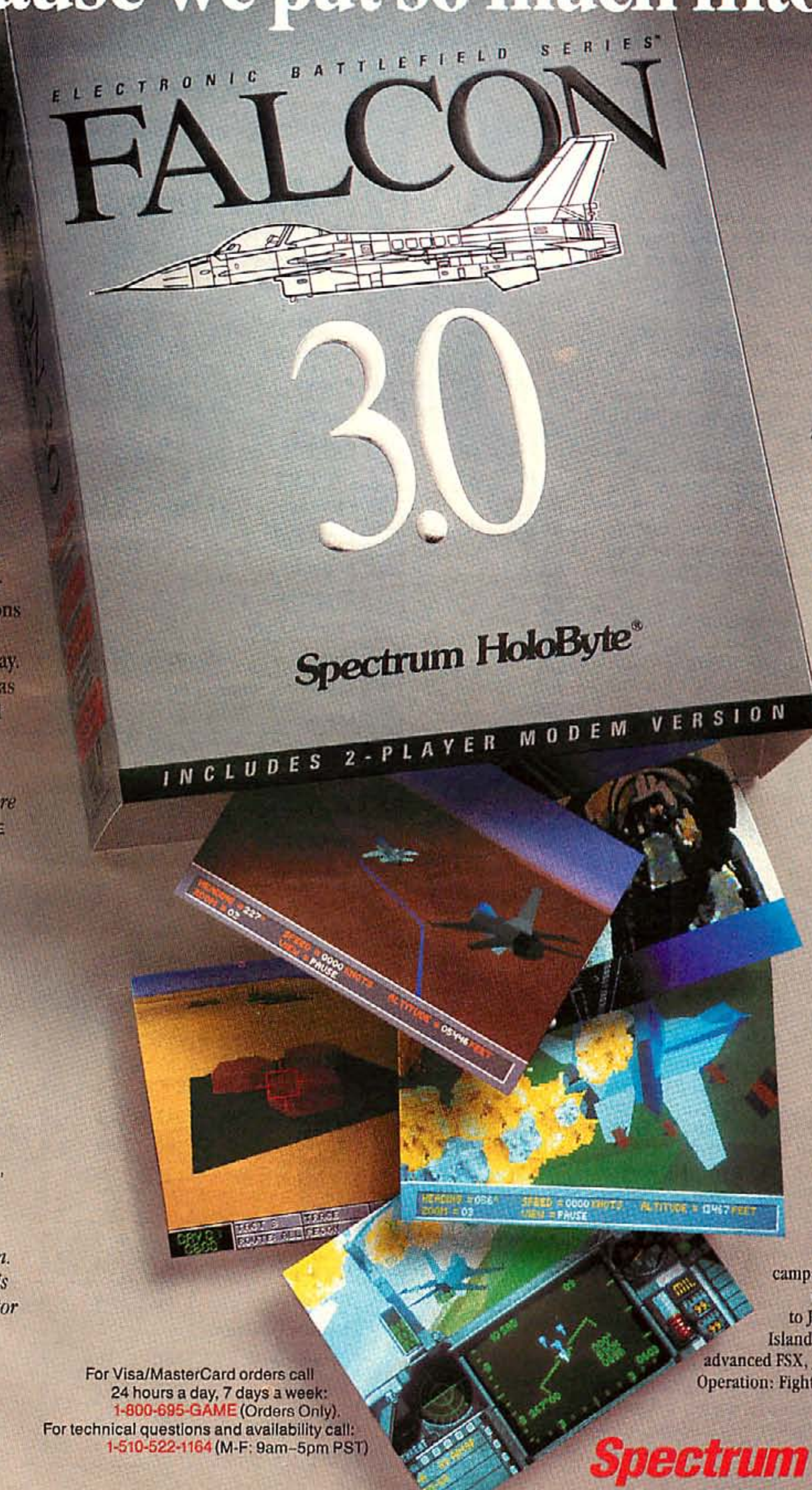
Bishop: +1 to perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 to strength. 18 free EPs. Two saints awarded. The character must be male and have perception, intelligence and charisma of 25 or more, and must have just been an abbot or bishop, or have spent the last 10 year as a courtier, manorial lord and/or priest.



Oblate: +1 intelligence. -1 charisma. 22 EPs. Receive one formula. The character must have an intelligence of 12 or more, not be from a common background, and never have been a novice, monk, friar, priest, abbot, bishop, clerk, professor, physician or alchemist.

Student: +1 to perception and intelligence. 24 EPs. Anyone 15 years old can be a student. Also, anyone who has an intelligence of 12+ and Read/Write of 6 or more and have just been

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Clerk: +1 perception and intelligence. -1 strength. 27 extra EPs. Must be 15 years old from a wealthy urban family, or have an intelligence of 12+, Read/Write of 15+ and have been a noble heir, courtier, captain, knight, schulz, priest, abbot, bishop, student, clerk, professor, alchemist, master alchemist or merchant-proprietor, or have spent the last ten years as an oblate, monk and/or traveling merchant.

Physician: +1 perception and intelligence. -1 strength and endurance. 21 EPs. The character must have an intelligence of 30 or more and have been a student, clerk, professor, physician, alchemist or master alchemist.

Professor: +1 perception. +2 intelligence. -1 strength and endurance. 24 EPs. Earns one formula. The character must have a Read/Write skill of 20+ and have been an abbot, bishop, clerk, professor, physician, alchemist or master alchemist.

Alchemist: +1 to perception and intelligence. -1 strength. 22 EPs. Plus one formula. The character must have an intelligence of 30 or more, and have been a priest, abbot, bishop, student, clerk, professor or alchemist, or have spent the last 10 years as an oblate, monk, friar and/or physician.

Master Alchemist: +1 perception. +2 intelligence. -1 strength and endurance. 20 free EPs. Two formulae received. The character must have an intelligence of 35+ and have been an alchemist.

Vagabond: +1 endurance and agility. -1 charisma. 27 additional EPs. Characters may be a vagabond unless they have just been a schulz, captain, knight, courtier, noble heir, priest, journeyman craftsman, traveling merchant, professor or alchemist, or have *ever* been a person of high place.

Peddler: +1 perception and intelligence. 23 EPs. Commoners of age 15 or anyone older may be a peddler unless they have just been a captain, knight, courtier, noble heir, priest, journeyman craftsman, traveling merchant, professor or alchemist, or have *ever* been a manorial lord, abbot, bishop, merchant-proprietor, schulz, master alchemist or master craftsman.

Local Trader: +1 to perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 to strength. 22 EPs. Open to any 15 year old of noble, wealthy, or crafts birth. Also, anyone with an intelligence of 12+, Speak Common of 5+ and experience as a captain, noble heir, courtier, monk, priest, abbot, bishop, clerk, physician, professor, alchemist, journeyman/master craftsman, swindler, peddler, local trader, traveling merchant or merchant-proprietor.

Traveling Merchant: +1 to perception, intelligence and charisma. 18 EPs. Anyone may be a traveling merchant who is 15 years old and of noble or wealthy birth. Also, anyone who has an intelligence of 15+ and Speak Common of 20+, and has been a local trader, traveling merchant, merchant-proprietor, noble heir, manorial lord, professor, master alchemist or master craftsman.

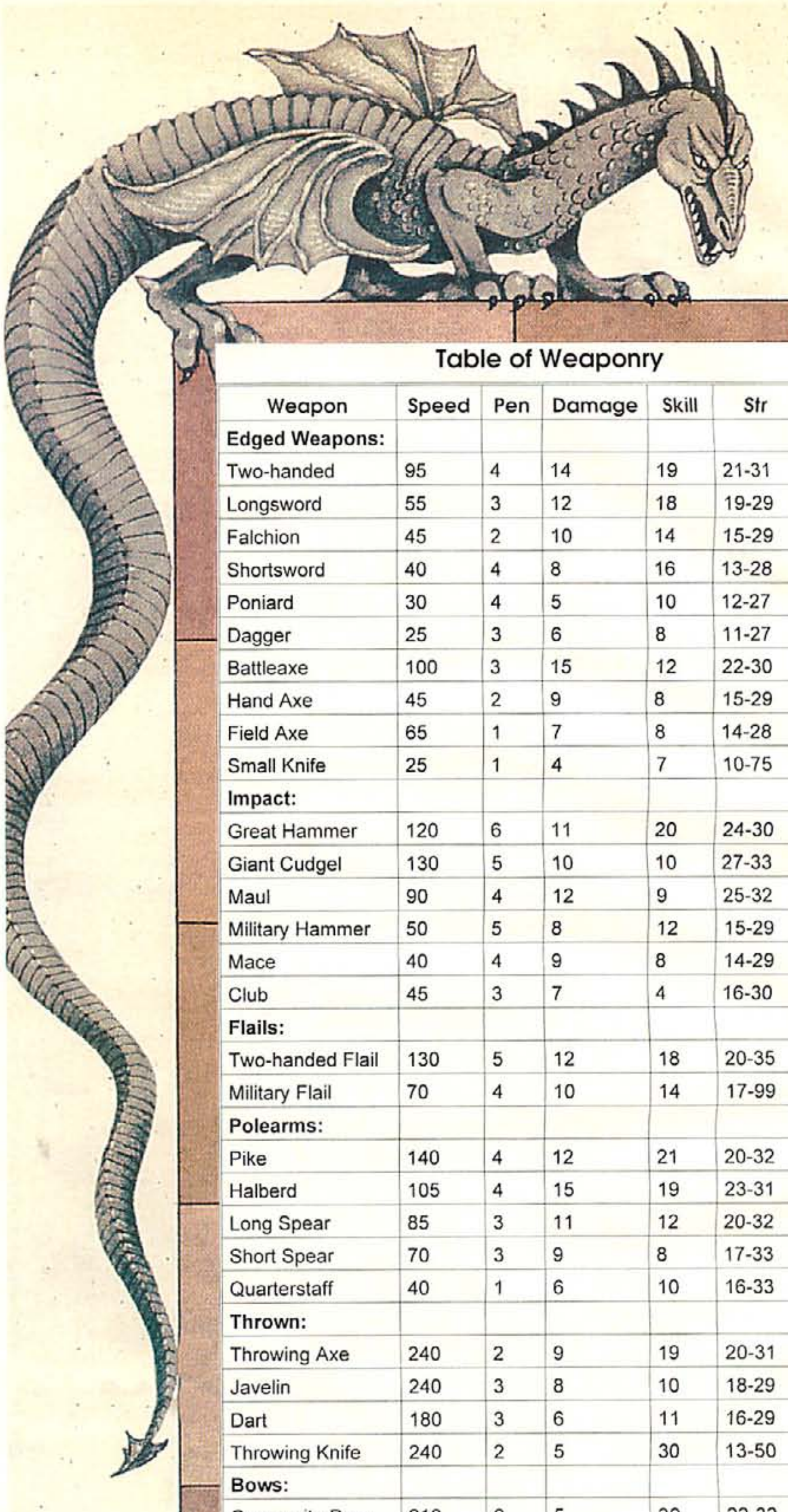


Table of Weaponry

Weapon	Speed	Pen	Damage	Skill	Str	Weight
Edged Weapons:						
Two-handed	95	4	14	19	21-31	10
Longsword	55	3	12	18	19-29	6
Falchion	45	2	10	14	15-29	4
Shortsword	40	4	8	16	13-28	3
Poniard	30	4	5	10	12-27	1
Dagger	25	3	6	8	11-27	1
Battleaxe	100	3	15	12	22-30	8
Hand Axe	45	2	9	8	15-29	4
Field Axe	65	1	7	8	14-28	5
Small Knife	25	1	4	7	10-75	0
Impact:						
Great Hammer	120	6	11	20	24-30	9
Giant Cudgel	130	5	10	10	27-33	15
Maul	90	4	12	9	25-32	12
Military Hammer	50	5	8	12	15-29	3
Mace	40	4	9	8	14-29	4
Club	45	3	7	4	16-30	5
Flails:						
Two-handed Flail	130	5	12	18	20-35	8
Military Flail	70	4	10	14	17-99	4
Polearms:						
Pike	140	4	12	21	20-32	17
Halberd	105	4	15	19	23-31	12
Long Spear	85	3	11	12	20-32	9
Short Spear	70	3	9	8	17-33	7
Quarterstaff	40	1	6	10	16-33	7
Thrown:						
Throwing Axe	240	2	9	19	20-31	3
Javelin	240	3	8	10	18-29	3
Dart	180	3	6	11	16-29	1
Throwing Knife	240	2	5	30	13-50	1
Bows:						
Composite Bow	210	6	5	30	22-32	7
Longbow	180	6	5	25	20-31	8
Shortbow	150	4	5	20	16-29	6
Missile Devices:						
Crossbow	540	6	7	14	18-99	9
Arbalest	660	7	8	16	20-99	19
Iron Handgun	720	5	9	12	17-99	14
Brass Handgun	780	7	9	11	16-99	13



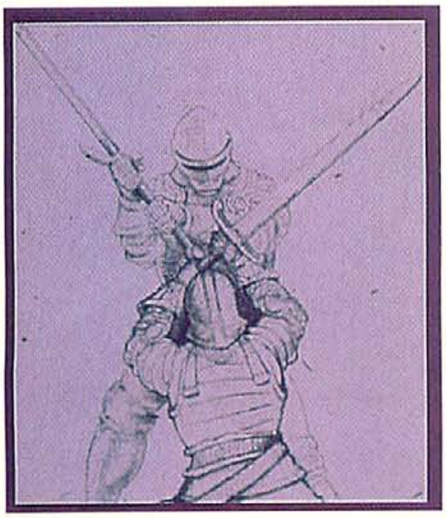
Circle Reader Service #43

Merchant-Proprietor: +1 to perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 to strength and endurance. 23 EPs. The character must have an intelligence of 20+, Speak Common of 10+ and have just been a traveling merchant, merchant-proprietor, manorial lord or bishop.

Laborer: +1 strength and endurance. -1 to intelligence. 31 EPs. Anyone may be a laborer unless they are 15 and of noble birth, or have just been a schulz, captain, knight, courtier, noble heir, priest, journeyman craftsman, traveling merchant, professor or alchemist, or have *ever* held a high-placed position.

Apprentice Craftsman: +1 to agility and intelligence. -1 to charisma. 28 extra EPs. Anyone may be an apprentice craftsman unless they are 15 and of noble birth, or have just been a schulz, captain, knight, courtier, noble heir, priest, journeyman craftsman, traveling merchant, professor or alchemist, or have *ever* held a high-placed position.

Journeyman Craftsman: +1 agility and perception. -1 strength. 26 EPs. Any 15-year-old from the two craft backgrounds may pursue this career, as well as anyone who has been one of the three types of craftsman or a physician or alchemist.



Master Craftsman: +1 perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 endurance. 20 EPs. The character must have an intelligence of 12+ and have been a journeyman craftsman, a master craftsman or a merchant-proprietor.

Thief: +1 agility and intelligence. -1 charisma and virtue. 22 EPs. Any non-rural 15-year-old may be one. Also, anyone who has a Streetwise of 10+ and has been a recruit, soldier, veteran, priest, friar, hunter, bandit, clerk, professor, alchemist or journeyman craftsman.

Swindler: +1 agility, perception, intelligence and charisma. -1 strength and Virtue. 26 extra EPs. Any 15-year-old of noble, wealthy or urban crafts birth may be a swindler. In addition, anyone who has an intelligence of 25+, Streetwise of 15+ and has been a recruit, soldier, veteran, priest, friar, hunter, bandit, clerk, professor, alchemist or journeyman craftsman.

Sturm und Drang

Some notes about the weapons and armor tables: Speed — the lower the number, the faster the weapon. For example, a shortsword (40) is two and a half times as fast as a battleaxe (100). Pen(etration) — the armor thickness that a weapon of average quality (i.e., 25) will match (penetrate). A weapon that does not match or exceed the thickness of the victim's armor will do 1/8 its damage against the enemy's endurance. Thus, a weapon that does seven points or less will not normally do any damage against a superior armor. For example, if a character is wearing chain, he/she will be annoyed by an enemy with a longsword. If that enemy has a two-handed sword, it's time to pay him some attention.

The Str(ength) range is the range over which no penalties or benefits apply to wielding the weapon. Lower strength will reduce the damage done by one point for every five points below the minimum. Higher strength will increase the damage done by one point for every five points greater. For armor, the two Weight figures represent those for protecting the vitals and limbs, respectively.

For every 10 points a weapon is of a quality better than 25, that weapon will do one more point of damage if it penetrates. For every 10 points of quality less than 25, a weapon will do one point of damage less. Armor of better quality will reduce damage received by one point for every 10 points of quality above 25, and armor of worse quality will increase damage by one point for every 10 points of quality less.

Shields increase the user's skill during melee combat by one half of one percent per seven, five, four points of quality for small, medium and large, respectively. They decrease one's skill by an equivalent amount for shields of lesser quality. For missile combat, shields directly subtract from the shooter's skill by 17-18 points for a large shield, 10-11 for a medium and five for a small.

Where one comes down on weapons depends on how much one wishes to micro-manage the party. The shortsword and mace are among the fastest weapons, and they penetrate everything except plate. The military hammer also bears consideration, since it will match plate. If a shield is used, one has to use a one-handed weapon to gain any benefit. The longsword has a good speed/damage ratio, but it does not penetrate brigandine and chain.

Armor is less ambiguous. Characters should wear the heaviest that can be used and still leave them normally loaded. Consideration should be given to how much weight the character can handle and still be at normal load. Since characters will get beat up in the course of their travails, leaving them at normal load will enable them to still wield their weapons effectively as the nicks and scratches add up.

The Armoury

Armor Type	Thickness	Weight Vitals/Limbs
Plate	5	28/31
Brigandine	4	27/29
Chainmail	4	23/26
Scale	3	21/24
Cuirboulli	2	6/8
Studded Leather	2	8/10
Leather	1	4/4
Padded	1	6/6

I would like to thank Arnold Hendrick and the other folks at **Microprose** for their kind cooperation and contributions to this article. I would also like to tip my helm to the users on **GEnie** for their "band of brothers" assistance. The career, skill, aging, weapons and armor data are used with the permission of **Microprose** from their forthcoming hint book *Clues to Darklands*. CGW



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Networking the Sierra Way

by Alan Emrich



It's all about community, described by my rather tattered dictionary as, among other things, "a society at large." When one acquires their first personal computer, they usually become assimilated into the community of computer users — learning the basics of bits and bytes, the hard facts about hard drives and appreciating that they can never have enough memory, storage space or processor speed. Still, the PC community, for the many who have joined it over the past 10 years, hasn't exactly been socially active. Unlike those who take up dancing, science-fiction or buy season tickets to something, computer users have few real meeting places where they can get together and hang out.



Playtester Heather "BrandyD" Davis

Enter, the modem. Following rapidly on the affordability of home computers came this device that connects them to telephone lines and, thus, to other computers with modems. The possibilities for information exchange were quickly realized and many networks exist today primarily to do just that. It is fairly common knowledge that people can get stock quotes, pay bills and book flights through their home computers. While allowing computer users to more easily share information, these "electronic libraries" are still not very social. After all, how many people go to the library to talk and socialize? Fortunately, the computer networks saw that a real "on-line community" was growing through the use of SIGs (Special Interest Groups — bulletin boards where people could exchange ideas on specific topics and, in the process, meet each other) and private electronic mail. Electronic "town halls" and live forums, too, have become common on-line staples on all the major computer networks, save Prodigy. Even these, however, only tend to create "sub communities" within their own, greater electronic kingdoms. Where can a computer user *cum* modem find a place to relax, have fun and make a few friends?

The Permanent Game Convention

Besides the community of computer users, readers of this magazine belong to another community; that of game enthusiasts. One thing that board gamers have enjoyed for decades is the social interaction of inviting friends over to play with them, regular game club meetings and even dedicated game playing conventions. Wouldn't it be great if there were a big, electronic game club? Something like a permanent computer game convention, only on-line? Just dial up the old modem, instantly find people, talk and play games 24 hours a day, year 'round?

Well, there *is* such a place. It's called *The Sierra Network* (*TSN*) and, after more than a year in business, they're adding so many improvements and new features that *CGW* felt compelled to take a fresh look at it. It was worth the trip.

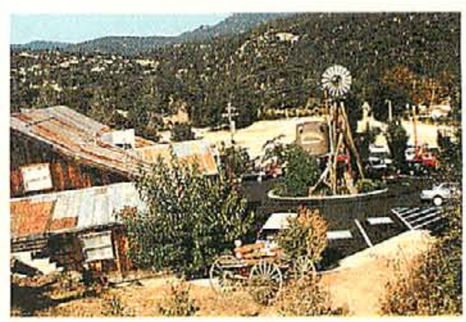
Small Town Atmosphere

Small towns provide a very warm and personal type of community to its members. Everyone, it seems, knows everyone. Folks tend to be friendly, helpful and, well, *folksy*. So it is on TSN.

Years ago, rural gatherings often took place in the largest barn in the area. It is not entirely a coincidence, perhaps, that the offices of TSN are located in a converted barn (actually, the barn was remodeled as a fine restaurant first, then TSN took it over when the restaurant closed down). Still, it's an appropriate atmosphere to be working in when one is providing an on-line meeting hall for gamers who are, in fact, "just plain folks." TSN may not have been born in a barn, but that's where the community really does meet.

Hanging (or Wearing) Your Hat at TSN

When Ken Williams launched TSN, he wanted "something my grandmother could use." In particular, that meant something that would keep her company and allow her to play bridge with friends just like her from all around the country. It had to be intuitive to use (user friendly) and be stocked with nice people (friendly users). So TSN was designed right from its inception for mass appeal, to be marketed at families and set in a friendly, game club type of atmosphere. Users create on-screen images of themselves, chat and play in a live, real-time environment. The "community" atmosphere was built in from the start, but despite it novelty, the public simply wasn't flocking to TSN.



TSN's "Home, Sweet Home"

Let's Do Launch

Launched primarily in California in May, 1991 with what was, essentially, beta software and few guarantees, The Sierra Network started out low and slow. As the software stabilized and users got reliable, TSN was rolled out nationally on the Sprint access network. However, TSN was simply not a "must have" service with the six basic games (backgam-


5
6
7
8

mon, chess, hearts, bridge, cribbage and checkers) that it had to offer. TSN needed more steak and more sizzle. Fortunately, the "S" in TSN stands for **Sierra** and the talented folks there rolled up their sleeves and got to work on helping realize TSN's potential.



SYSOP Coordinator Winnie (Tawn) Lawler

TSN got to work planning and programming new features to attract the family market they sought. After all, with an ambitious goal of growing to 100,000 members by the end of 1992, there was much to do for a fledgling network with less than 1/10 of that number after their national roll-out. Thus were *LarryLand* and *SierraLand* born. Each area was to add new places to go and games to play, featuring interactive *Red Baron*, **Dynamix**' outstanding flight simulator. While in their current, beta test incarnation (which was what I had to go on as of this writing), these improved features are nice, but the game is still a bit kludgy. One thing that can be said about TSN, however, is that although they don't have the largest customer base among the big computer networks, they certainly listen to the customers they have! Customer requests for features have remained the design goals for TSN improvements. Each revised beta I received while researching this article was another *major* refinement. From the effort and output I've seen, this certainly bodes well.

TSN: The Next Iteration

The first thing one will notice about the new TSN (dubbed "Version Two"), when it is released, is that connection time is much faster.



An Excellent Little Roulette Sim in LarryLand

Also, the switching of "hosts" need no longer be done manually (it will be done seamlessly by TSN). Then, upon entry into TSN, one is greeted by an overview map of the places that can be visited and a cursor with which to select a destination. Beginning clockwise on this map, at one o'clock, one finds the post office. This is a much improved version of the present e-mail system on TSN. There is no more "hosting around," with all mail boxes now being "global," and the address book, forwarding and save to disk features have all been made easier to use.

While the BBS section was closed during the version two playtest, SierraLand was in full swing. Players enter by creating a "kiddie" characture of themselves (and selecting from some rather unusual interests such as jokes and talking). Games here include a greatly enhanced *Red Baron* (the inviting player selects time of war, starting altitude and several other options) and the old standby, *MiniGolf*. A 3-D tic-tac-toe game called *SneakATac* is looking good, as is the *Rocket Quiz* trivia game. *PaintBall II* enhances the original game, while the addition of a demented *Checkers*-style game called *Boogers* and a multi-user paint and draw program called *Graffiti* round out the games to play. A new trophy room has also been added where the top ten players of *Red Baron*, *MiniGolf* and *PaintBall II* are posted.

Also on the main map is an Information Booth where you can type in a friend's name and find out where they are located on TSN in an instant. Above that is the TSN Clubhouse (aka "The Constant Companion"). This is the next incarnation of the basic TSN service, adding *Go* and *FlipFlop* to the family games selection. Furthermore, *Chess* and *Backgammon* games can now be saved for later play. Many meeting rooms are provided for different interests, including the Treehouse, Yak Shak, Teen Club and the Bridge Club (*Bridge* gets a lot of respect on TSN). At least, those were the room names on the test version where I spent the most time at the TSN Clubhouse.

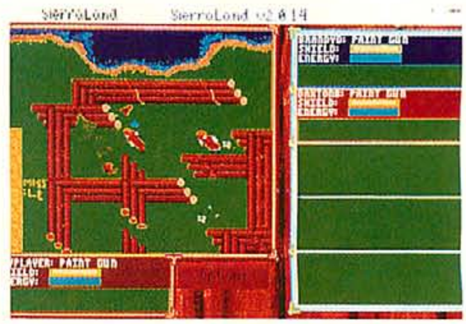
There is also a TSN building on the main map where customers can go to change their password, get their billing statement, print documentation, read the event calendar, arrange conferences and so forth. Like a town hall, much of the civic activity of the TSN community takes place here at the TSN building.

A "transporter" building is also on the main map. It will take TSN users to new maps and worlds when they are created. Above it, though, is LarryLand. Users can restrict entrance to other family members by creating a separate password for access to this adult-oriented hang out. Players create another persona (a la the *Leisure Suit Larry* universe) and receive some "Larry Bucks" (those who are broke can always run to the blood bank and get around $100 more) which are used to gamble at the *Poker*, *Roulette* and *Blackjack* tables, or at the *Slots*. (For "real gamblers," the Roulette is very good, Poker is limited to five players, dealer's choice and the 21 and Slots are passable little sims). Alternately, one can meet someone at Lefty's Bar, where kisses and flowers can be bestowed to another user's image (cute, and a nice way to flirt with others in total safety) and various bar games can be played. While the *LarryLibs* wasn't working in the version I examined, both the *Liar's Poker* (played with serial numbers from a fake bill) and *Veracity* (a formalized *Truth or Dare* game) were a lot of fun.

On-Line Fantasy Role-Playing

Finally, there is the volcano on the main map, which leads to *The Shadow of Yserbius*, a live, on-line fantasy role-playing game. Designed out-of-house by **EA/Infocom** alumnus Joe Ybarra and his team at **Tsunami**, there is a real look and feel of playing a decent *Dungeon Master* style clone here. Parties travel in groups of up to four players (whom one meets in the volcano), and it is wise to mix the six different character types available (barbarian, knight, ranger, cleric, wizard and thief). Some areas of the dungeon can only be accessed by certain character types (or combination of types!).

Players can create a stable of six characters, but play only one at a time. There are some bizarre distortions in *Yserbius* (two-handed



PaintBall II is Colorful Amusement

weapons do not prevent a player from using a shield in the playtest version I've been using) and the amount of gold and experience points heaped on the player seem inflationary from the fantasy games I'm used to. Regardless, it all hangs together very well and will no doubt be an extremely popular addition to TSN.

The key thing that bodes particularly well for TSN regarding *Yserbius* is that it comes from outside **Sierra**. This means that other outside game development groups can solicit their ideas to TSN and, possibly, get their products on-line for all to enjoy. Since TSN had the foresight to make their network accessible to out-of-house developers, it has neatly created a win-win-win situation for TSN, the creators of new services and all TSN users.

Comparatively Speaking

So where does that place TSN in terms of the other big, on-line networks? Well, while CompuServe and GEnie have memberships in the 150,000 - 500,000 range, the graphic interface, flat fee structure and marketing toward non-traditional computer network users of TSN leads more appropriately to a comparison to The Prodigy Service Network. Here's a quick comparison table:

	TSN	Prodigy
Users	12,000	1.7 million
Fee/month	$12.95*	$14.95
Focus	Games	Information
HD space	2.5 Megs	1.4 Megs

* = For 30 hours of usage, $2/hour beyond that.

Another interesting aspect of comparison is how both networks deal with unruly users.

Since both are very family oriented, they must keep an eye on the less mature members who cannot resist insulting or abusing fellow users. While Prodigy takes a proactive approach by scanning all of the bulletins posted there (using, primarily, a glorified spell checker), it is "No harm, no foul" on TSN until, and unless, someone hits the "Complain" button found at the bottom of every message received. (These are, after all, live chats, so discourse can be much less formal than the method of posting bulletins on Prodigy, where a single bulletin can easily lose its context).

When a complaint comes in on TSN, a warning is issued and a repeat complaint will deny access to the (ab)user until they check in with Winnie (Tawn) Lawler, the combination mom and vice principal of TSN. She, or one of her staff, will discuss the situation with the person on probation and either grant a final chance or cut that user off completely. It is all very human, civilized and compassionate, but then what else could one expect from a community like that found on TSN?

The Troubles With TSN

TSN has three large and interrelated problems. It suffers from: 1) past broken promises to their current user-base regarding timely updates and new features; 2) a user base that is still too small; and 3) heavy financial costs at the corporate level. To try to set things straight with the users, version two of TSN promises and delivers a lot of extra punch and should really wow them. However, it became clear that despite the round-the-clock playtesting and tons of overtime being put in to make the October 2nd release date, version two of TSN simply wouldn't be ready in time. At the furious pace I saw them working on and testing version two, there is a real commitment being made to timeliness (it may even be out by the time this article hits the newsstands). However, most customers would rather have software with fewer bugs than released on time, so TSN is doing the right thing.



Combat in the *Shadow of Yserbius*

Stockholders in Sierra On-Line received the bad financial news in the stock report for the year ending in March, 1992. (Even *Forbes* magazine commented on it.) TSN lost close to $2 million that year (much of which can be contributed to R&D and equipment purchases for their national launch). Still, with all of Sierra's clout, it's a wonder why the user base isn't any larger than about 12,000 members.

To that end, the marketing people have a great deal in mind in regards to building up a more robust TSN. While much was discussed off the record in terms of pending negotiations, TSN did announce that their deal with Radio Shack has been formalized. The new Tandy *Sensation* multimedia PCs will have TSN bundled with them, along with enough free connect time to get users hooked into TSN as a way of life. It's a step in the right direction, and the more gamers one can meet on TSN, the better it is for all the users there.

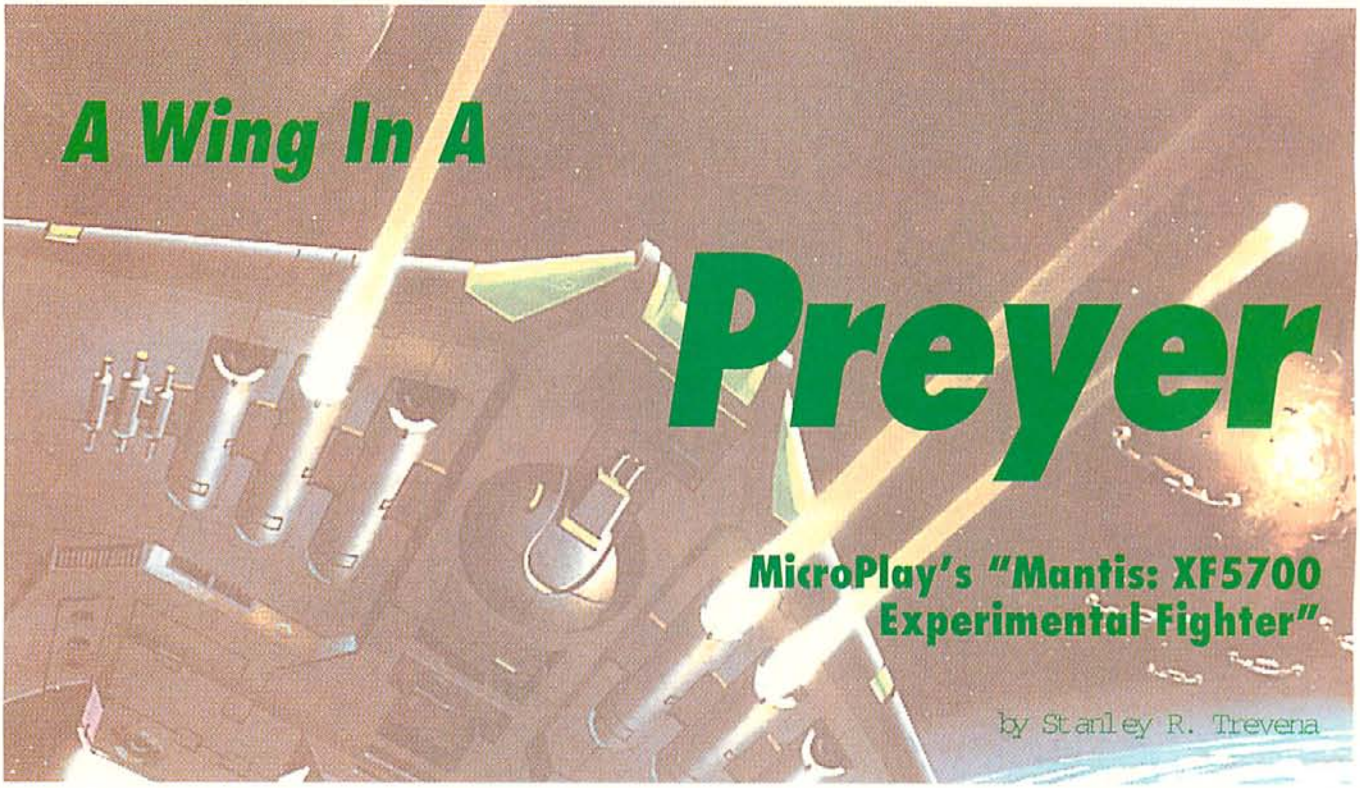
A Home Within A Home

Granted, those who frequented TSN really loved it. Nice people from around the country have made so many friends on-line that TSN has become a regular "meet" market. On TSN more than any other network, one can find intelligent people who express themselves artistically (in their self portrait), socially (with their live, back-and-forth message "chatting") and personably (as they play games with new found friends — one can learn a lot about a person at the old gaming table, says I). In fact, TSN has been a huge hit with the elderly and infirm, in addition to lovers of computers and games. It really *is*, as advertised, "the constant companion." For me, I don't have to find a home away from home. TSN is like Disneyland, Nickelodeon and Toys R Us rolled into one. Thus, TSN has become my "home within a home." Thanks, TSN.

For more information on TSN and the new features to be found in version two, call 1-800-SIERRA1. When you sign on, look for AlanE and be sure to say "hello." Like the rest of the members already there, I'm always happy to make new friends on-line. CGW



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A Wing In A Preyer

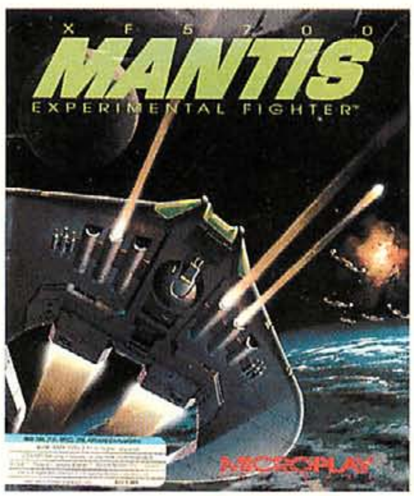
MicroPlay's "Mantis: XF5700 Experimental Fighter"

by Stanley R. Trevena

Just when I thought the marketing department had thought of it all, along comes a new innovation in software packaging, pop-up endorsements (sometimes called "shelf talkers"). The game shopper will spot this little yellow post-it sized endorsement for **Microplay**'s *Mantis* protruding out about two inches in front of the *Mantis* box. In nice bold print are the phrases "If you liked that "other" space adventure, you'll love *Mantis*!"..."Ultra-realistic space flight simulation." The only thing wrong here is that *Mantis* is neither a successor to that "other" space adventure nor is it an "Ultra-realistic space flight simulation."

Mantis is based on the game *Warhead* by Glyn Williams and its storyline reads like a mix of too many science fiction films. The Earth has been attacked by an insect-like alien race called the Sirians. These aliens bear a strong resemblance to the terrestrial cockroach, only a lot taller (1.4 meters and weighing in at 58 kilograms). The Sirians communicate telepathically and while individually they are about as smart as the average roach, collectively they are highly intelligent. Using the strategy of a group mind the Sirians destroyed all the major population areas on Earth, thus disrupting the human collective mind, or so they thought. Like other "aliens" of recent popularity, Sirians need host bodies to incubate their young. At first the casualties of war were used as hosts, then

TITLE:	Mantis
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
# PLAYERS:	1
PRICE:	$69.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS:	Paragon Software Corp.
PUBLISHER:	Microplay Hunt Valley, MD



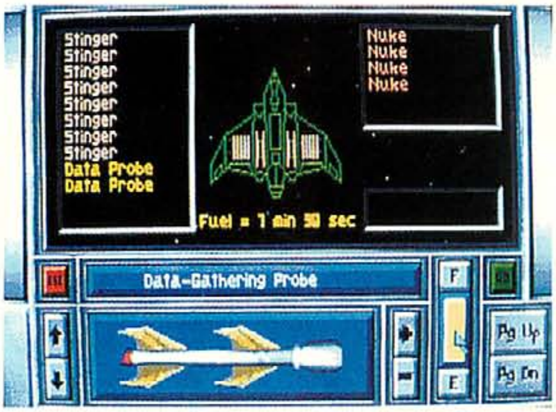
the infestation grew to the survivors of the initial attack.

The remnants of humanity joined together to form F.O.E (The Fist-Of-Earth) to fight this infestation, counter any future attack, and ultimately destroy the Sirian race. The player assumes the role of a Mantis pilot. The Mantis is a one-man space fighter based on Solbase, a massive space station orbiting between the Earth and the Moon. From Solbase the Earthlings plan to launch a counter offensive to squash the alien infestation.

Mantis will run on systems equipped with VGA and MCGA only. Support for most major sound boards is provided. A mouse or a joystick are recommended (the box fails to mention support for the *Thrustmaster* joystick). Players who seldom browse the "README" file when installing a new game are going to miss some important information if they skip this one. Printed out there are three full pages of changes. A message from Glenn Dill, a *Mantis* Programmer, on Compuserve stated that the manual had to be done several months before the product was complete, thus the large "README" file. The manual is an inadequate 48 pages in length, lacks a tutorial, and omits basic information on some aspects of gameplay. A misprint on the box states that there are over 100 missions when in fact there are only 70-80 depending on pilot performance. One manual change players will want to note is that in order to activate the Quad-Jump engine the "Q" key has been replaced by the Ctrl-Q combination. Unfortunately, on most keyboards the "Ctrl" key sits next to the "Alt" key. Naturally, hitting the Alt-Q combination jettisons the player immediately to DOS without so much as a confirmation check, almost like entering the black void of space without a suit.

Sting Commander

Unlike that "other" space adventure, *Mantis* claims to model the actual physics of space flight. The Mantis ship has a single thruster that, when fired, sets the craft in motion in the direction the ship is pointed. To stop the ship the pilot must rotate 180 degrees and fire the thruster to counteract the forward motion. To assist the player in navigation there is a field of small colored dots overlaid on the HUD that indicate direction of movement and velocity. After initiating forward thrust, rotating the ship 90 degrees and firing the thrusters, the ship will be moving in a diagonal direction.



The sound in *Mantis* is impressive and some of the clearest heard to date. Sound is used extensively in the introduction and sporadically throughout the game. A speech disk is promised as is a CD version of the game. This game has some of the best explosion sounds ever, the only problem being sound waves cannot travel in the vacuum of space so how can a pilot hear his target explode? (This little fact seems to be consistently overlooked in these sorts of games).

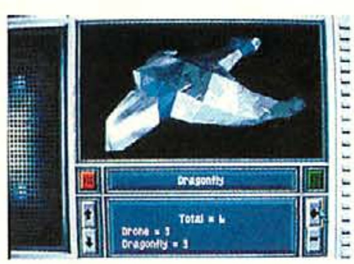
The typical mission follows a traditional path. Pilots attend a briefing — cut to ships scrambling for launch, shot of pilots waving in cockpit, launch animation — and the mission begins. While all the animations and speech in *Mantis* are quite impressive, the game falls flat the minute the player leaves Solbase. This is because edge of the seat dogfights do not play a big part in this game. Almost all battles are won without getting very close to the enemy. Missiles will exterminate almost all enemy ships encountered while the use of the Mass-Driver Cannon in the heat of battle will almost always lead to a quick death by enemy missile fire.

The pilot is free to fly around Solbase but the coordinates of the enemy are already programmed into the ship computer and the ticket there is a quick press of the Ctrl-Q key. No need to fly around and find the enemy, when the ship comes out of Quad-Jump the enemy is sitting in the center of the HUD. Fire a few missiles, press Ctrl-Q again and docking is all that remains. Pivot the ship around and Solbase should be in sight, fire the thrusters and get within 3000 meters, press the "L" key and the ship lands automatically — end of mission.

Green with Envy

Back at base the player is debriefed (awarded medals if earned), and once in a blue moon treated to some onboard interaction with the post-flight robot, or with the player's fiancee, an old flame who slings drinks at the bar. If the player went down in flames during the mission, answer in the affirmative and the mission can be replayed with no penalty. Not completing the mission successfully earns the pilot a reprimand, and too many of these will get the player booted out. Breaking away from that "other" space adventure, *Mantis* uses digitized images of actors. These images are grainy and have a yellowish green tinge to them. Either the inhabitants on Solbase all suffer from space nausea or the color palette used does not have a color that simulates flesh tones.





Also, it is nice to know that animation sequences can be skipped by pressing button #1 on the controller. This certainly saves time. For example, removing the animations means that the first 30 missions can all be played in under a minute each with a quick stick and trigger finger.

Staying in Control

Controls are split between the joystick and the keyboard making for difficult combat sequences. Direction is controlled by the stick (or the keypad), cannons are fired with button #1, thrusters with button #2, and missiles are launched with the Enter key. Target selection is activated by the "T" key while the "TAB" key switches between weapon types. Using a *Thrustmaster* joystick these controls are all handled without the keyboard.

Using the on-board computer, nine levels of auto-pilot are provided, all offering varying degrees of control. If the player wishes to have a high success rate on missions, use of Mode 3 is recommended as a cheat. Not only will auto-pilot mode three pursue targets, it will intelligently select targets. A super ship that goes by the name Berserker likes to be entertained by the player, who is affectionately referred to as George. On one mission, using auto pilot Mode 3, a lock on the Berserker is made. He then starts to send targets toward the player. The ship computer will drop the lock on Berserker and acquire the new targets. Playing in Mode 3 will, in most cases, allow the player to defeat all enemies by simply pressing the Enter key when a lock is made and toggling weapons when one type of weapon is depleted.

Collision Course

Some *Mantis* enthusiasts have suggested that for anyone "looking for a realistic space simulator, then *Mantis* is *it* (for now anyway)." Having reviewed *Shuttle*, by **Virgin Games** (issue #94), and having played *Mantis* over the past few weeks, I cast my ballot in favor of *Shuttle* as the "Ultra-realistic 3-D space flight simulation." To me, *Mantis* just doesn't have the right stuff.

The flight model is weak, the action limited, and overall gameplay, poor. The flashy graphics, incredible sound, and fast (or is that short) action scream out "Arcade!" On the other hand, the use of the actual physics of real space flight seem to indicate a target audience of simulation fans. When these two opposing forces meet, the effect is a cancellation of mass and a null game.

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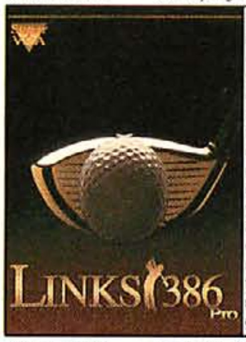
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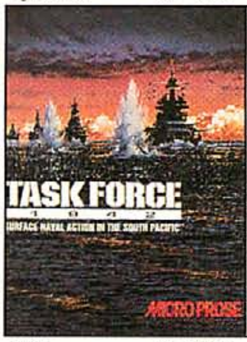


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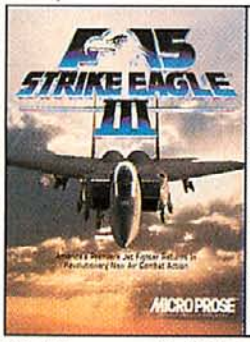
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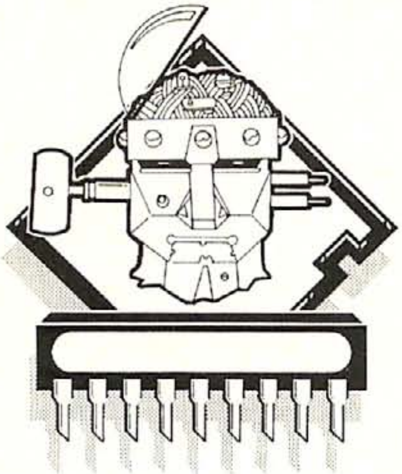
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A Cyberpunk Meets Robopunk

Maxis' *RoboSport* for Windows

by Jim "Bot" Cooper

Do you ever get the urge to guzzle down a quick lube, juice up the old bunny, jack in to suck out the latest aggressor routines and just throttle off with the cyber-droogs for some serious chassis-bashing? If you know what I mean, it's Robo time, Sport.

Over the summer **Maxis** released a Windows version of the robot basher already available on Amiga and Macintosh. If you want an exercise in empire building, clever up, robo brain: this is not your Software Toy.

They call *RoboSport* "the thinking man's shoot-em-up" and guerrilla chess with sound effects. What it really feels like is shooting one of those SuperSoaker squirt guns on your computer. It takes less than five minutes to learn the programming language your "bots" obey and a single game to master. The map interface is only slightly more challenging, since both are intuitive and powerful. A lot of thought obviously went into them. This leaves plenty of time for strategy.

What do you get?

RoboSport is "Tank" with an attitude, the ultimate electronic wind-up toy. Up to four teams of 1-8 robots field seven different weapons: three projectile, two missile, one up-close-and-personal, and one booby-trap. Remember *MazeWars*, the real-time gang-banger for Macintosh networks? Same feeling.

How quick is the rush?

Fast. It takes only two game seconds to enter the arena. You can shoot three times, duck, turn, switch weapons, and die by the third second. Survive 15 seconds and you've survived round one.

Can you do it with a friend?

You might say your equipment was made for it. Everything works perfectly with two people at the controls. Just re-

TITLE:	Amiga, IBM Windows, Mac
REVIEWED ON:	IBM Windows
PLAYERS:	1-4
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-Up Serial Number Comparison w/ multi-players
DESIGNER:	Edward Kilham
PUBLISHER:	Maxis Orinda, CA

member to use protection. Garbage cans, rubble, fences; nothing compares to a good bush.

Can you do it in public?

Four people can do it at a time. But try not to get attached to any one partner because you never know which way they'll turn.

Can you prove it later?

Smile; you are always on film. Watch, gloat, or plot revenge at your leisure. The afterglow viewpoint pioneered by flight sims is half of this game. So, if your situational awareness gets airsick at altitudes above 10 feet, try piloting these mechanized grunts.

Can you squeeze a quickie in during the day?

If you've got five minutes, you've got a date.

Can you get away with it?

Maybe if you're both real gentle. But we're talking noise here. Gunfire, explosions, death-screams. Real dogs-and-cats-living-together stuff. You can turn it off, sure, but then, what are you getting away with? Whatever your decision, SoundBlaster will support it.

What's it like?

That's putting your finger on it: to play just follow a simple algorithm. Plot your moves: watch the carnage: repeat.

The basics are look, move, cover, and shoot. You see 90 degrees accurately at a



time and another 90 in peripheral vision; you don't have to look where you're going. Three robot postures trade speed and visibility against protection. You can fire into a square or at whatever pops into sight. Three guns balance rounds-per-second against accuracy. Bullets have to hit first; grenades and missiles don't, but they scatter.

Two kinds of time are important. You decide how much (real) time you get to program your moves each turn: the bad news is this interval never changes during a game; the good news is your job only gets easier as you lose bots. The second kind of time can be reset after every move, and that's how big a slice off the (game) clock the next round will take.

The beauty of the game is that you write a short program every turn for each of your robots. The only conditional allowed is called "Scan&Fire"—our old friend opportunity fire — so you really do end up strategizing as much as you would in a chess game. After every round your concentration is rewarded with a fireworks display: reward or punishment, at least the feedback is quick.

There are sneaky things to do aplenty.

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'THEATRE OF WAR' is a real-time game of strategy and conquest on a chess-like board. Features Super VGA graphics in 640x480, ray-traced 3D game pieces, modem play, 1 or 2 player game, music that varies with the mood of the game, configurable game board up to 50x50 tiles. ←$32 ← BUY 2 GET 1

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'SEX OLYMPICS' combines sexual, tongue-in-cheek humor, adult graphics, unusual sound effects and an icon driven point-and-click interface to create a game that is a little different than your usual fare. Features 3 levels of game play, and objects that change location each time you play. $24

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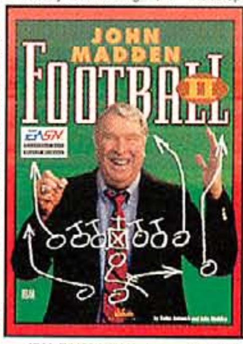
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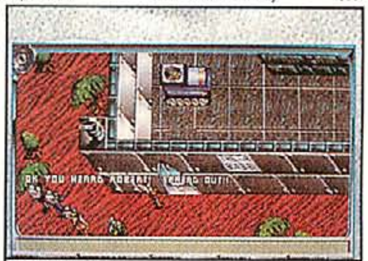
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'PATRIOT' is the definitive land warfare simulation for the PC. In this initial battleset, coalition forces meet with the defiant troops of Saddam Hussein. Command over 2000 units from either side. Features 256 color VGA graphics, state-of-the-art database, interface & mapping. ←$44 ← BUY 2 GET 1

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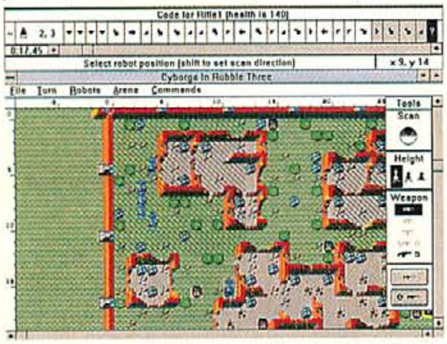
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Zapping at close range is marvelous when you have both backed up carefully, and at



the end of the last turn realized walls don't wear bandoleers. Even nastier is the Time Bomb. Once you've made it to a treasure pile or baseball base, what better way to return the hospitality? They work really really well. Die-hards will appreciate Johnny Baker's fail-safe tactic.

Driving home with my copy, I narrowly avoided a car that pulled into an intersection and—stopped. Just like a mynah bird taught to say "here kitty kitty" or an S&L president, you could say its driver was programmed for self-destruction. It's a lot more fun on the small screen; the sound effects are better, for one thing. With a little practice you can take out two or three silicon cousins, if not quite as many taxpayers.

Can you make excuses afterwards?

Sorry, there's not much luck here. Chess it's not, but smarts will win out, and quickly. Dummies crash and burn. If you know how to look, know how to move, and know how to shoot: hey, you're an expert. The rest depends on who you're with.

What's Great?

The interfaces are so clean they disappear. Programming takes a point and a click. There's no need to order the robots step-by-step as they find their own way around, and those you already ordered even move around the map as you program the rest. If you change your mind, just erase and re-program. Watch the clock!

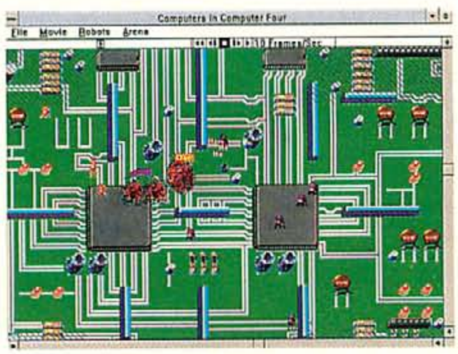
Does Robo Know Baseball?

My favorite scenario is Baseball in the Huge Suburbs arena as a Beat-the-Clock challenge, but in ten minutes I can grab a Capture-the-Flag Skirmish in the Small Rubble arena, Missile-Fest style. You design your own games with the scenario selection interface, choosing among five objectives, five battlefields, three terrain types, and five scenarios, plus details like how much missile ammo comes with and who's with whom. Next to a four-player free-for-all, the most fun is taking on two allied computer teams with a human partner. For that arcade feeling, crank turns down to five seconds with 30 seconds to plot. Chess instead? Firefight sans missile weapons in the Battle arena in 30-second chunks with no time limits and no substitutions. D-Day? Invite your friends to the Huge arena, pump up the computer forces with AI on Crafty, dial a pyromaniac's portion of missiles and grenades, and warp those 'bo's in waves.



What's Bad

Figures on the map are so small it can be hard to tell their facing, especially crouched. The plot and move interfaces are near perfect, but moving between them requires an unnecessary step or two, and every break in the action is fatiguing in a game that comes this close to real-time.



What's Missing

RoboSport might have been a better game if it embraced the gospel of the Terminator. As it is, it lacks a satisfyingly violent milieu and I miss the usual megalomaniac's manifesto. Victory crows tend toward "We put paid to them. By Jove! They came a cropper," more than "We breathe fire and fart grenades. Mess with us. Get blowed up."

In Maxis's defense, by the nature of the game, action will at times feel out of your control. This potential for frustration was deftly countered by *RoboSport*'s humorous slant. Although watching a pivoting defense eviscerate that brilliant pincer attack may be painful, your robots' pathetic Ow's and Aargh's will be amusing.

The charm of role-playing lies dormant in every game, but it would take a terawatt imagination to coin pet names for these robots. Identical but for weaponry, thickness of skin, and aim —whose inter-relationships are hard-wired—all robots look and sound alike from the color down. If Maxis opts for an expansion set, I would hope to mix and match chassis, engines, sensing and targeting systems, as well as a few more weapons.

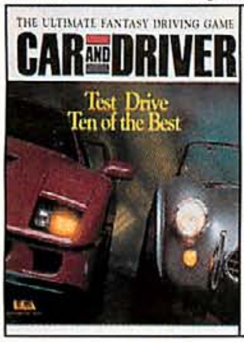
What's the Word?

RoboSport is a classic anyway. The interfaces are greased lightning. Customizing your games means you can happily play for a long, long time. And perhaps best of all is the multi-player dimension. When even the best AI has taken you as far as it will go, *RoboSport*'s modem and serial connections stand ready to bring your friends right to your throat. Kudos to the programmers for the flawless quality I've experienced. Of course, cooperation is always orders of magnitude more fun than pure competition, and its innate capability in *RoboSport* may be the one trait that gives this away as a Maxis product. For increasing our global competitiveness alone, employers around the country should place this game high on the list of network applications to install first. Ross Perot should hire any team that can tackle a Hostage Firefight Melee in the Suburbs.

I still don't understand how something that plays like a street game feels like chess, but it does. If you like *Heavy Nova*, *Lemmings*, or particularly *MechWarrior* on **GEnie** or PC, try *RoboSport*. It will be interesting to compare it to **Three-Sixty Pacific**'s new abstract conflict title, and especially to **SSI**'s *Cyber Empires*. All in all, *RoboSport* is at least three excellent games crammed into one nearly seamless package. That's the best excuse for putting out another entry in a well-worn category, and the *only* good reason if it's still chock full of virile titles. CGW

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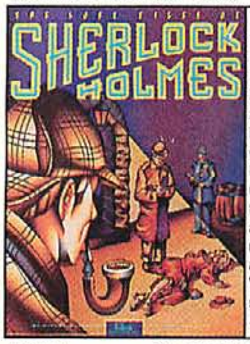
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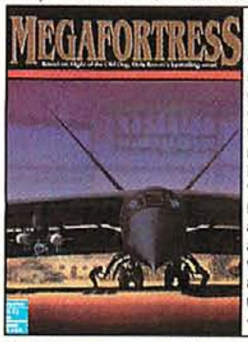
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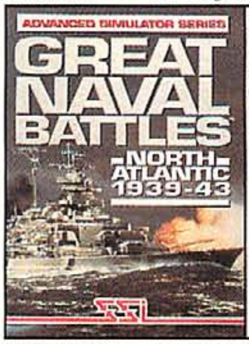


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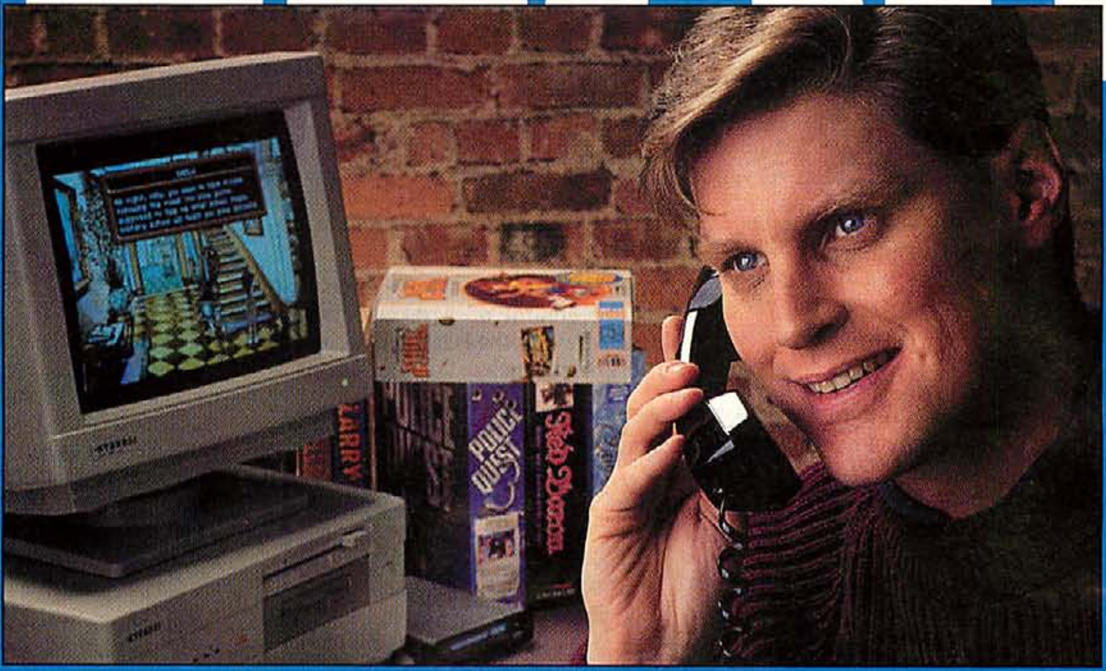
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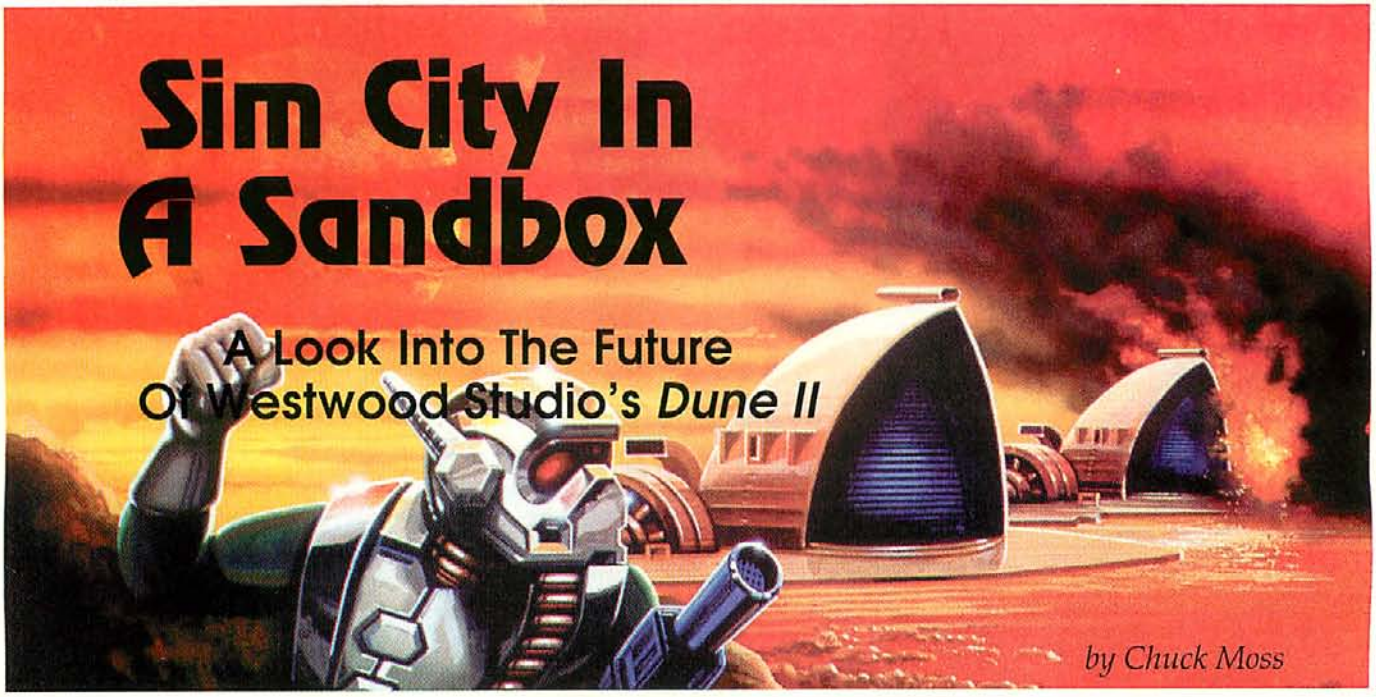
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Sim City In A Sandbox

A Look Into The Future Of Westwood Studio's *Dune II*



by Chuck Moss

"Who asks for justice? We make our own justice. We make it here on Arrakis — win or die...let us not rail about justice as long as we have arms and the freedom to use them." — Duke Leto Atreides, *Dune*.

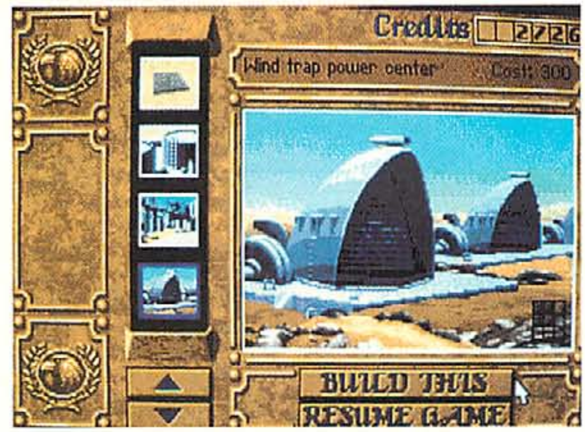
So it's back to the beach...more accurately the sandbox. As Frank Herbert's stunning science fiction novel *Dune* produced many sequels, **Westwood Studios/Virgin Games** are working on a sequel to their computer game *Dune*. Title? *Dune II*. A sneak preview of a beta version left this *Dune* fanatic and tireless gamer as addicted as any spice-dependent Fremen to a game that combines elements of *Sim City* with *The Perfect General*.

Dune It Make Your Brown Eyes Blue, Too?

Background: In Herbert's series, planet Arrakis, aka "Dune," was a desert world inhabited by giant sandworms who excreted "spice," an addictive drug that gave long life and prophetic abilities (as well as turning one's eyes deep blue.) The Imperium was dependent on spice, which was more precious than anything. Grappling for the wealth and power spice provided were the feudal Houses Atreides and (bad guys) Harkonnen. The resulting epic struggle made up Herbert's classic novel.

In *Dune II* the player joins a three way fight for control of Arrakis between House Atreides, the Harkonnens, and a non-Herbert bunch called the "Ordos."





A player picks one House, the others are computer-controlled. The object is to progressively gain control of the planet, region by region. Each region is won by competition in increasingly difficult scenarios.

The meat of the game lies in contesting for regions. A player is an entrepreneurial viceroy, plopped down in the desert with a quota of credits to earn. He is equipped with a construction base, a small military force and a starting amount of monetary credits. The unexplored regions of the map are a dark unknown, as in **Interstel**'s classic *Empire*.

The player must explore the region, build up his base and mine spice (thus bolstering his income), make quotas and win the scenario. Of course, there is an enemy around somewhere doing the same thing. Success in one region moves the player on to another region: a harder scenario with more menu choices (i.e., bigger factories, stronger units).

Dune marries the development/financial management dynamic of *Sim City* to the tactical battle challenge of *The Perfect General*. Players build their bases by pouring concrete (a *lot* of concrete gets poured. So much that one begins to feel like an old Soviet Empire techno-commissar), and constructing spice refineries, windtrap power stations, storage silos and various military installations. Development is handled as in *Sim City*, with building

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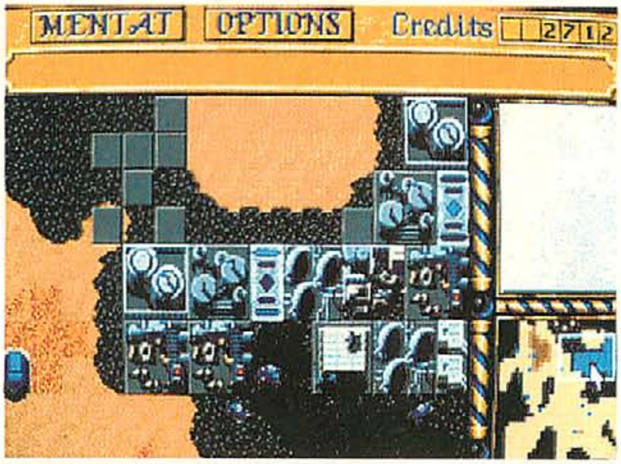
Game Created by: Captain Byte's Bit Shop
Box Artwork by: Josh Stigers
Computer Artwork by: Steve Laveirge

choices made on a separate screen menu, paid for in credits, and placed via mouse.

To afford all these improvements, the player must mine spice, shown on the map as red deposits. Spice is sucked up by a harvester machine, taken back to base and converted to credits. Unfortunately, rich spice beds will be contested by the enemy. Fortunately, that's where the game gets interesting. Players start with a small force of units composed of infantry and light armor. As in *The Perfect General*, individual units are controlled by mouse. Orders are given (move, attack, guard, etc.) and objectives on the map designated.

This makes *Dune II* a hands-on game of tactical exploration and combat. The player actively moves and fights his forces. There is no generalized "battle" or "defend" command. Players take command and fight, develop tactics, or get slaughtered. It's a tense grope in the dark to find and harvest the spice, a frantic race to build, and a wild melee of shooting, burning, exploding units, with the player clicking between different encounters.

Of course, strategy is a major consideration as well as of tactics. Although *Dune II* is, at root, a tactical game, strategy cannot be overlooked. An ecologist's nightmare, the purpose of *Dune II* is to suck dry the planet's only natural resource. Victory is decided by meeting spice quotas, and while it's loads of fun to go on a construction orgy and roll over the rubble of enemy bases, one can stand supreme in the region and find the spice used up! Also, each house has its own strengths and weaknesses. Harkonnen has brute military power, Ordo must work in stealth.



Bottom line: This is a stripped-down *Dune*. There is no Guild, Bene Gesserit, Sardaukar, Muad'Dib, Fremen, shields, Face Dancers (or face suckers, for that matter), interstellar politics, religion or planetology. It is strictly a build, fight, and make money game with a *Dune* hook and a Dino De-Laurentis movie look.

Verdict: I love this game! The graphics are gorgeous. The top-view of the desert terrain looks great, while the little cars leave tracks, dead men sprawl on the ground, damaged units smoke and burn, and the ground shakes when a building blows up! It is all fascinating!

The now-standard mouse interface is simple. Regional set-ups change to provide replay value. The game is easy to learn (I did it without documentation) and although the AI isn't the brightest bulb on the porch, it's hard to beat. This game is a fast, tense, visual feast that can easily swallow up an otherwise productive workday. To quote Paul Muad'Dib: "Kull Wahad!" *Dune II* will definitely spice up one's gaming stew. CGW

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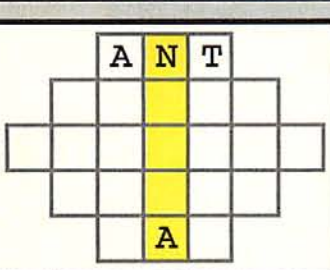
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Mystery Word Grid



WORD LIST

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ASK	MAJOR	ANT	WINGS	ACE
MUTANTS	INDIANA	INVADER	RUNNING	CRAWLER
CHASE	EAT	TOWER	SIT	FLINT
PET	MICRO	SET	DREAM	FIT

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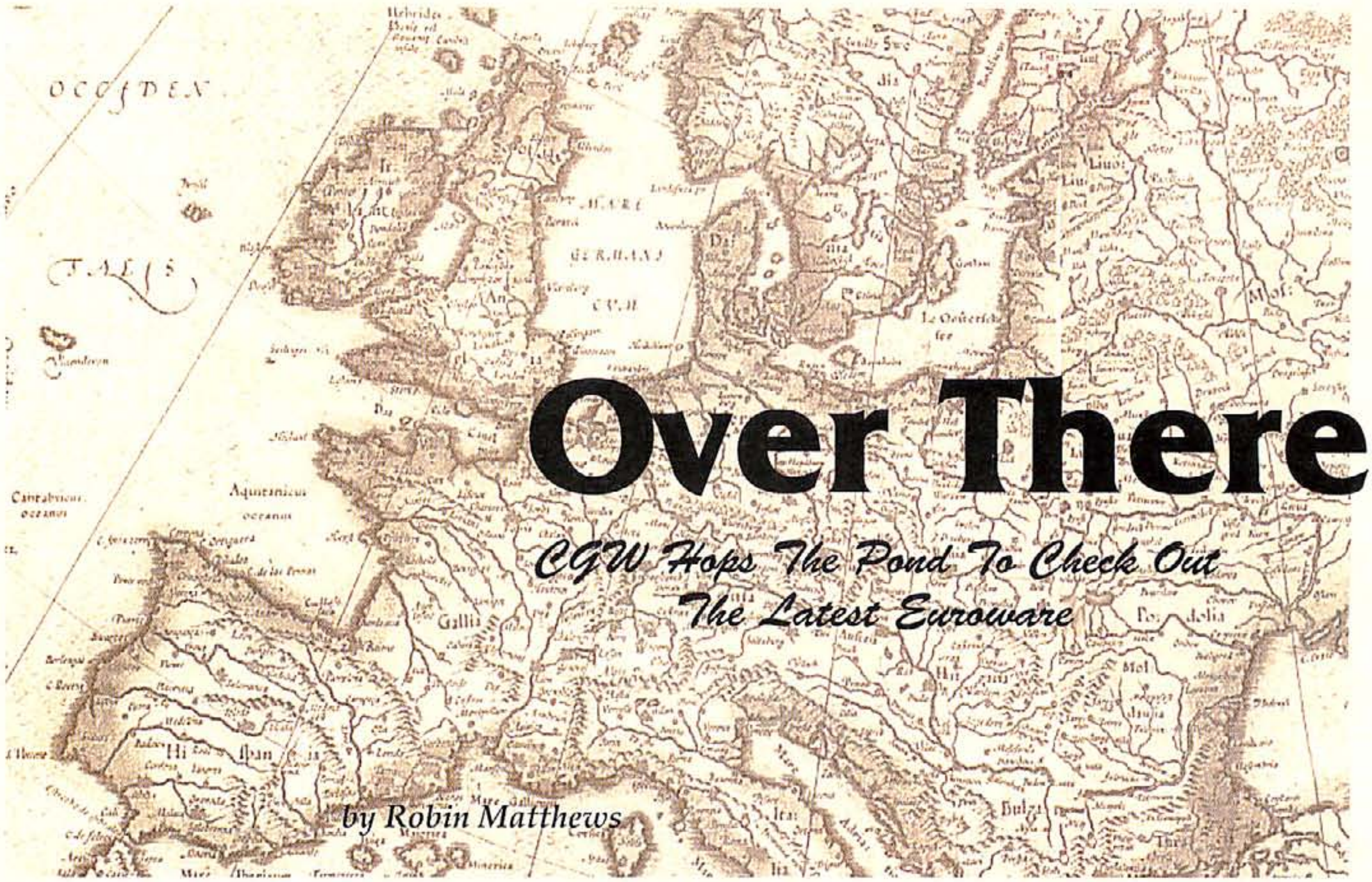
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Over There

CGW Hops The Pond To Check Out The Latest Euroware

by Robin Matthews

Lots happening this side of the pond, with more and more of the European software houses, or European subsidiaries of U.S. Companies, now releasing their own products. **Microprose UK** is following hot on the trail of *B-17* with the eagerly awaited *Harrier*, and also a graphic adventure called *Legacy*. This is the first **Microprose** graphic adventure designed in the UK, and is also their first collaboration with the wonderful people at **Magnetic Scrolls**.

Magnetic Scrolls is one of the great names in European software, and its links go back to an arrangement with **Rainbird Software**, and titles such as *The Pawn*, *Guild of Thieves*, the bizarre *Jinxter* and lately, with **Virgin**, both *Wonderland* and the *Magnetic Scrolls Collection*. This is not however a text based game with bells on, but rather a fully scrolling, free-movement gaming world.

Legacy is a horror type adventure set in Pressis, New England. The player is the sole remaining heir of the Winthrop family, and has very recently become the sole heir upon the passing away of... well, depending on who one chooses, it could be anyone of several. Confused? Well, OK, the player can select who he/she has as relations (interesting idea eh?), and this will affect how the story unwinds.

A very detailed plot is contained in *Legacy*, with the storyline being 'released' as the player progresses through the game. Suffice to say the Winthrop's have been through one or two trials and tribulations over the centuries, and via various astral planes Alberoth the Sower of Discord and Melchior Master of the Endless Void are 'house guests' at the ancestral home. Full 256 colour graphics, digitized sound, auto mapping, plus lots of interesting touches make this one to keep half an eye (and a clove of garlic) out for.



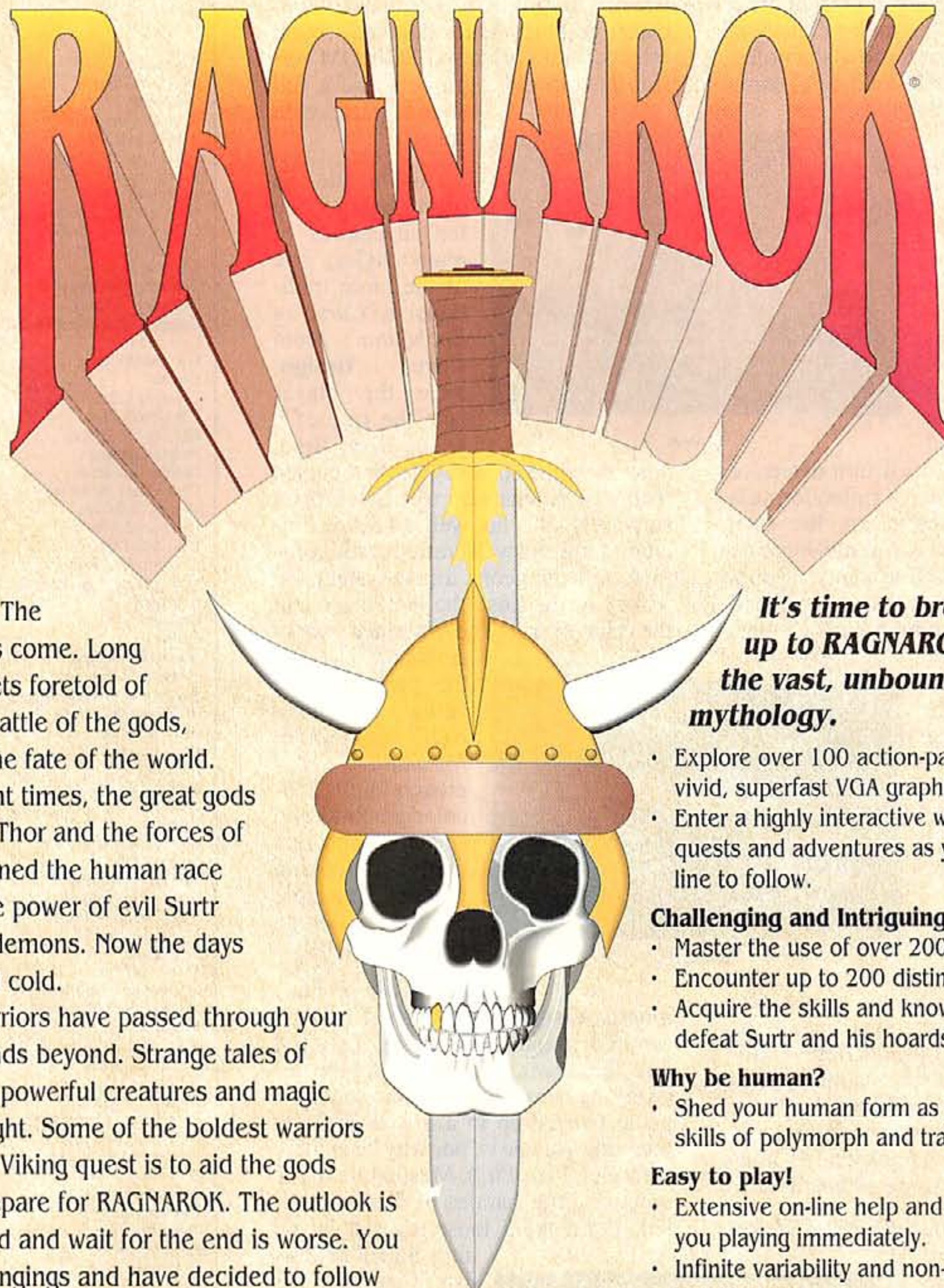
Legacy

The skies over Europe may be rather crowded in the coming months, as both *Harrier* from **Microprose UK** and *Tornado* from **Digital Integration** are nearing completion. In *Harrier*, the famous VTOL aircraft that served with distinction in the Falklands War, and its adapted version in the U.S. Marines Corp are included, and there has been some massive attention to detail with the programmers spending days at the local RAF base — RAF Wittering. This innovative aircraft should be an absolute cert for a computer simulation, especially with its revolutionary Giruad shading.

Tornado is still sitting in its hangar under development, but the simulation of the famous RAF multi-role aircraft promises much. Hopefully it will get off the ground before it's actually replaced in the various air forces!

Yet another flying promise comes from the **Argonuat** development team (hopefully better than the disappointing *Birds of Prey*), this being *A.T.A.C.* This combines a flight sim with very strong strategy elements as the player co-ordinates the flights of four planes,

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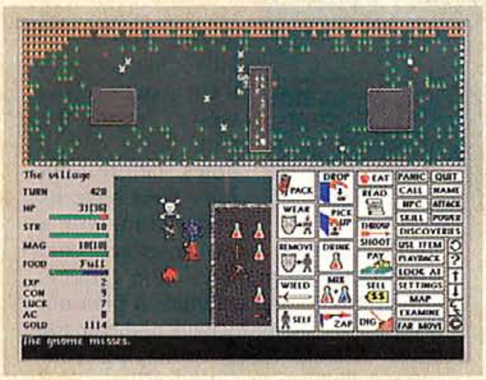
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and two choppers in a 'war' against the Drug Barons. Set in the near future, the Columbians have truly cracked it, having penetrated all the major cities and reducing law and order to a shambles. The player leads an elite force of some 250 agents plus the above aerial hardware. The product should be released as this is read.

The French developer, **Tomahawk**, has unleashed *Fascination* on an unsuspecting world. The player takes on the role of a female flight attendant who, of necessity, must turn detective in order to trace down a stolen formula and make sure she clears her own name. *Fascination* is a multi-location graphic adventure with plenty of puzzles, most of which are logical and sensible, good variation in locations, and a fascination for risque humor. *Fascination* offers some interesting cinematic cuts and presents its above-average, but far from state-of-the-art graphics, within innovative "frames." The digitized voice actors (on the CD-ROM version), however, are not convincing and the entire presentation comes off as a B-movie style of production. Available both on MS-DOS machines with 256 color graphics and sound effects, or on CD-ROM with some new locations/views, a sound track, and 45 minutes of speech for some 20 characters.



Lurete



Tornado

Another French outfit, **Coktel Vision** is launching their new *Bargon Attack* with blurb like "journey to the limits of distress in a Paris like never before" (obviously based on travelling on the Metro in the rush hour). The plot is along the line of space invaders escaping from their consoles to take over the world. The 'B' movie plot is actually presented quite well, but be warned this is a very 'French' product albeit in English. Another interesting quotation from the box art sets the scene..."under the Sacre-Couer dome and behind every earthman looms the invaders silhouette..." *Bargon Attack* promises 256-color graphics and digitized sound effects, with a promised CD-ROM version having more graphics and a full sound track with speech.

This month has been a bumper one for adventures in many styles; one of the more traditional is *Curse of Enchantia* from **Core Design**. Here the player take the role of a young hero, Brad, who is whisked away to the cursed realm of Enchantia, where (surprise surprise!) all is not well. Locations include a full and well crafted castle complete with dungeons, a cave system, the Valley of the Lost, the Ice Palace and the Graveyard. The interface works smoothly enough, the product style being a *Loom/ KQV/ Legend of Kyrandia* approach. Full 256-color graphics and sound support in a pretty looking product. Available on the Amiga (1Mb) and IBM.



Harrier

Finally in a busy month, **Virgin** has published its long awaited graphic adventure, *Lure Of The Temptress*. Players control the unswerving hero, Diermot, who starts the game banged-up in a prison cell, not knowing who he is, nor why he is there (sense of *Deja Vu?*). Meanwhile in the quietish little hamlet of Turnvale all hell is breaking loose, caused by an ugly bunch of tourists called the Skorl. They are causing chaos, and guess who's the only one to sort them out? OK, we've heard the plot once or 30 times before, but *Lure* does have its own charm, with a good interface and some cracking graphics. The game is not overlong, and provides a pleasant respite after a lengthy hack n'slay in the latest AD&D RPG, or having conquered the bugs in *Ultima VII*. CGW

Advertisers List

Unlucky 13



Virgin Games' *Floor 13*

by Charles Ardai



There is something about espionage games that is extremely unpleasant. However much fun they might be as action-adventures or as political thrillers, they have a dark side which is disturbing in direct proportion to how realistic a particular game is.

Espionage games, by their nature, turn players into characters of questionable morality. This is not because espionage is immoral (though one could make this argument), but because the things spies do are many of the same things which, if done by ordinary people, would be seen in an instant as horrible. Spies spend their days lying, breaking into places they are not supposed to be, stealing information and property, abducting people, interrogating people, and killing people. Turning these activities into a game, even if one makes them cartoonish in order to render them inoffensive, is questionable. While espionage may be a necessary evil in our imperfect world, our enjoying it is not.

TITLE:	Floor 13
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$19.99
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS:	Shahid Ahmad, David Eastman
PUBLISHER:	Virgin Games Irvine, CA

All games on the subject, even good ones such as Sid Meier's *Covert Action*, have things about them that make sensitive players cringe. Bad espionage games can be very bad indeed.

Having said this, I feel no hesitation in saying that *Floor 13* is the most unpleasant espionage game ever made. One hesitates to call it disturbing, if only because that term might be mistaken for a compliment — great novels, after all, are frequently disturbing. *Floor 13* is disturbing only in the way that a genuine fan of the James Bond ouevre (sic) feels about the film version

of Casino Royale. It is simply handled poorly.

In *Floor 13*, the player takes on the role of Director General of a Secret Service-type organization lodged on the 13th floor of a London office building. The DG's mandate is to keep the current British government in power at all costs. If this means infiltrating opposition parties and undermining them from within, so be it; if it means initiating smear campaigns in the tabloids, very well; and if it means ransacking people's apartments, kidnapping people and torturing them, or simply killing people in one of a number of ruthless ways, well, that's fine, too. The only restriction on the DG's activities is that he must keep a low profile — no one must know that *Floor 13* exists, much less that its activities are endorsed by the government.



If this game were set in the U.S.S.R., it would be called "KGB." If it were set in Nazi Germany, it would be called "Gestapo." Fictionalizing this sort of loathsome secret police activity does not make it more palatable. *Floor 13* is as ugly a game as any I have played since that memorable disaster, Custer's Revenge.

Covert Operations

The game is not even a good game from a strictly technical point of view. *Floor 13* resembles nothing so much as that old BASIC game, "Hamurabi." One's activity is limited to selecting choices off a series of menus and then reading the results as they arrive on the DG's desk in the form of reports, transcripts, and newspaper clippings.



The player controls eight departments: Surveillance, Pursuit, Search, Interrogation, Removal, Heavy Assault, Disinformation, and Infiltration. Selecting one of these departments from the main menu brings up a sub-menu. Select "infiltration" and the computer asks how many of one's uncommitted agents one wants to use to infiltrate a particular group. Select "heavy assault" and it asks when the assault should take place. Then it asks the player to confirm his orders. That's the whole game.

So a standard "round" of gameplay consists of reading the morning's reports, committing some of one's resources to whatever problems have cropped up overnight, and then selecting "Next Day" from the main menu. This process is repeated (with some slight variations, such as days when one is tongue-lashed by the Prime Minister for not being sufficiently secretive) until one either gets the boot for being a bad DG or quits the game out of boredom and disgust.

Hannah Arendt could not have conceived of more banal evil. *Floor 13* turns acts of unmitigated cruelty into bloodless, arm's length bureaucratic functions. According to the storyline, the DG is permanently isolated in his office, so that he never sees his own operatives, much less the innocent people whose lives he is destroying. In game terms, this means that one has no interactions other than with the menus. In fact, aside from a dozen black-and-white still pictures against which the menus are superimposed, this is a pure text game.



To make matters worse, the text itself is corrupt in any number of ways. There are numerous misspellings: one act produces "negligble" political damage, for instance, and a government foe is described as a "closet homosexuel." Punctuation is sporadic and unreliable. The text is also peppered with clumsy obscenities — the mildest is "Screw yourself" — which seems to have been added to the game from the puerile perspective that such language, no matter how laughably employed, adds realism and depth to a project.



Floored

It is the game's indulgence in profanity more than anything else that justifies the sticker on the game box which incorrectly states, "Subject Matter...Unsuitable For Young Gamers." In fact, the subject matter is equally odious to players of all ages, perhaps least so to those young enough not to know better. There is a difference between a game that treats dark subject matter with candor and maturity (for instance, Corruption from Magnetic Scrolls) and a game like this one, which merely exploits such subject matter.

Floor 13 seems to relish its own depravities. It has no sense of distance, no self awareness and no irony. One gets the feeling that the designers thought it would be "neat" to make a game in which one got to control a secret police force, and that they had no inkling of the sensitivity and care one would have to bring to such a project in order to pull it off.

Insofar as it makes light of the very real pain of people who have suffered at the hands of real-world *Floor 13*'s, this game is obtuse, naive and worthy of our pity. Insofar as it tries to pawn off on today's gamers a type and quality of gameplay that was obsolete by 1978, except in the poorest public domain software packages, *Floor 13* would be best kept as what its fictional characters want it kept — a deep, dark secret. CGW



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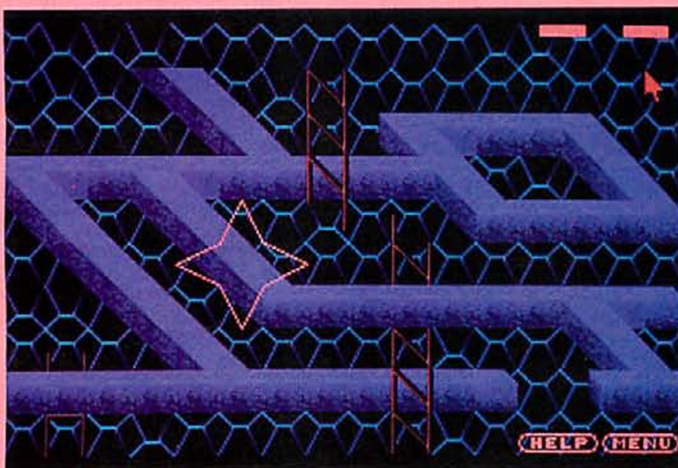


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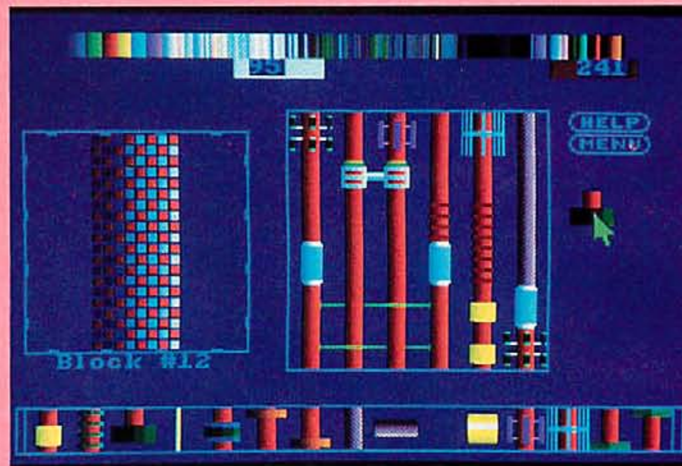
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Rumor Guy Discovers Grave Consequences

by Baltimore Irving

A foggy mist rolled across the gentle slopes of a wooded cemetery in Tarrytown, NY. Between this sleepy little township and the wooded southern hills of Connecticut, a legend was born. So, it was with a certain amount of unease that I waited in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery for the appearance of my contact, a well-connected industry source who was supposed to confirm or deny a rumor about a major new science fiction license. According to another source, **Electronic Arts** has acquired the license to publish a *Ringworld* game. Not only is the game based on the science fiction classic by Larry Niven, but I had even heard that Niven himself was going to be contributing to the design.

A slight chill caused me to shake for a moment and when my eyes focused again on the line of birch trees at the far side of the graveyard, the zebra-striped trees seemed covered with a shadowy shape, a shadowy shape that was slowly moving toward me. I glanced over my shoulder with my first thought being that I was being ambushed. Even in my panic, I thought for a moment about the fact that **Sir-Tech Software** is working on a multi-character espionage game that is tentatively called *Ambush*. The whole concept is a unique blend of role-playing and strategic elements with plenty of high-tech glitz like 3-D rendered interiors and a super musical score.

Even as the silhouetted equestrian drew closer, his or her (dare I say, "its") appearance remained in shadow. The whole scene seemed as ethereal and out-of-place as some of ZZ Top's appearances in their music videos. Except, the equestrian wasn't singing, not even like the crossover country western band is expected to sing in a soundtrack for an upcoming game called *ZZ Top Pinball*. In fact, the equestrian wasn't likely to talk or sing, since said rider had no head.

I had to look twice to make sure he, she or it wasn't a "nightmare" from one of Piers Anthony's *Xanth* novels. The nightmares were black horses who brought bad dreams to the characters in Xanth. In fact, I was beginning to wonder if one of those nightmares hadn't just brought a bad dream to me! If I hadn't been so scared, I probably would have told the shadowy rider that **Legend Entertainment** has just acquired the rights to publish an adventure game based on Piers Anthony's fantasy universe of puns and malapropisms. In fact, it isn't certain, as of yet, but there may be a tie-in between the game and the very next *Xanth* novel. As it was, I didn't say anything.

I just looked again to see if I was wrong about the rider's lack of both a physiognomy and a head to hang it on. No, that was, indeed, an empty collar jutting out from the rider's overcoat. It was an other-worldly sight in quite a different manner than the goofy aliens in **LucasArts**' upcoming sequel to *Maniac Mansion. Day of the Tentacle: Maniac Mansion 2* is a graphic adventure written by Tim Delacruz and Dave Grossman and using the familiar LucasArts interface (Story Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion — SCUMM). Only the gamers who actually read computer game credits are likely to recognize those names. Their credit line in *The Secret of Monkey Island* insisted that they wrote all the clever and funny material in the game. In the spring, gamers should find out whether the bizarre pair can live up to their earlier billing.

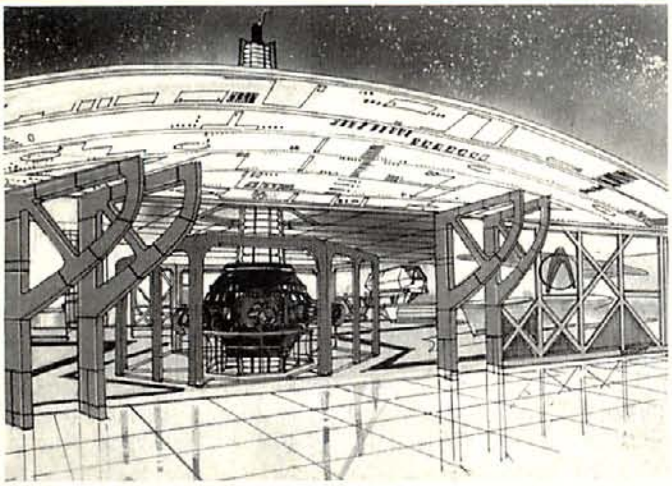
As I watched the rider maneuvering masterfully between the historic tombstones, I was suddenly glad that they were placed so closely together that the horse couldn't hurdle them. I began to zig-zag in a backwards retreat through the graveyard, stumbling occasionally and scrambling to my feet as the horse's hooves occasionally struck against the tombstones and added a sense of urgency to my flight. It's amazing what sound can do. Even in the midst of my panic, I wondered if the **QSound** audio for **Virgin**'s *Terminator* CD-ROM (for Sega Genesis) would get my adrenaline flowing like the sound of those hooves.

I tripped over a tombstone and came crashing to the ground. I looked up and read an epitaph from a Revolutionary War veteran and my brain, as it is programmed to do, immediately shifted gears from the grim reality of war to the challenge of war*gaming*. I thought briefly of **Impressions**' scheduled game of world conquest and how it is supposed to be their first true modem-to-modem game. It's also supposed to be a real-time game and I was beginning to think my "real-time" was up.

The shadow of horse and rider covered my prone body. In abject fear, I raised my eyes and glanced helplessly at my nemesis. Two factors changed my perspective on the situation. First, the headless horsewoman (her cloak could no longer conceal her shapely physique) was holding a rumor bag in her hand, replete with eye-slits and mouth slot. Second, the once empty collar was now beginning to blossom with a beautiful brunette coiffure which topped a famillier and even more lovely face. "Gotcha'!" laughed my source, "I knew you'd be excited about *Ringworld*, but I figured I'd have to get your attention in order for you to write anything about our *Zombie High*."

She was right, but I just have to hope they stick with the tried-and-true horror themes and don't ever decide to do a game based on solving mass murders. I can just see their entire PR department coming after me with chain-saws in order to get my attention. In fact, it's such a vivid image that I'm not going to write anything else about *Zombie High* until next month, just to spite them. CGW

Inside The Industry



Spectrum HoloByte Buy-Back Launches *Next Generation*

On September 24th, **Spectrum HoloByte**'s CEO, Gilman Louie, announced that the company had received $4 million in venture capital funding from Kleiner, Perkins, Caulfield and Byers, a high-tech venture capital company with an uncanny record for picking winners (gamers will be interested in the fact that the company was a major player in **Electronic Arts**'s initial funding and is currently involved in the multimedia tri-venture with EA and **Time Warner** called 3-DO (nee SMSG)), AT&T and other partners. The infusion of capital allows **Spectrum HoloByte** to purchase back the shares in the company owned by **SWICO**, a charitable trust which was formerly part of Robert Maxwell's multi-national media empire.

SWICO has severed all ties with the Maxwell family, but not before being tainted by the scandals that forced the family into bankruptcy. Indeed, British journalists investigated Spectrum HoloByte thoroughly in the light of the Maxwell pension fund scandals and tried to pin down a rumor that Spectrum HoloByte did not really produce software, but served as a shell company where the Maxwells were hiding funds. Fortunately, this was easily disproved, the buyout was able to proceed and both Spectrum HoloByte and SWICO are out from under the clouds of suspicion.

Spectrum HoloByte has also moved into spacious new offices where a large portion of the floor space is apportioned for the research and development of virtual reality experiences. In the past, Spectrum HoloByte has been a VR developer on two paths: as a developer of cockpit-based military trainers (based on F-16s, of course) under subcontract to defense contractor **Perceptronics** and as a developer of full-immersion entertainment experiences for **Edison Brothers** for their mall-based entertainment division. Instead of using cockpits, games developed for Edison Brothers require the use of goggles, controls and sensors that read the body's position to place players in a virtual world.

Perhaps, the most exciting announcement from Spectrum HoloByte, however, is that the company is joining with Paramount Pictures and Edison Brothers to produce a virtual reality game based on *StarTrek: The Next Generation*. Since virtual reality is a hardware-intensive forebearer of the fictional "holodeck" which is featured on the television series, it seems particularly appropriate that *StarTrek: The Next Generation* is the first television show to be licensed as a full-immersion entertainment product.

Neither Spectrum HoloByte nor Paramount Pictures has revealed what the story line of the product will be, but Paramount Chairman Brandon Tartikov's carefully worded announcement concerning the venture stated that players will be able to be fully-immersed on the bridge, holodeck, engineering deck or in the transporter room.

Legend Entertainment To Buy Back Unit

Legend Entertainment (publisher of the successful *Spellcasting* series of games, *Timequest* and *Frederick Pohl's Gateway)* has announced its intention to buy back the interest in the company held by **American Systems Corporation**, the Chantilly, VA-based defense contractor. Details of the purchase agreement have not been released, but CGW has received word that the terms are extremely favorable for the group of partners (including the company's original partners, Mike Verdu and Bob Bates) which is purchasing the entertainment software company. In addition to previously announced products (the just-released *Spellcasting 301: Spring Break* and the soon-to-be-released *Erik the Unready*), the company has recently acquired another major book license (see The Rumor Bag) and has agreed to develop an adventure game that teaches the government ethics code to United States Department of Justice employees.

Electronic Arts Launches Japanese Venture

Electronic Arts (NASDAQ:ERTS) and Japanese corporation **Victor Musical Industries** (VMI) have announced a joint venture to convert existing EA properties to Japanese products for Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo, NEC 9801, DOS V platforms and the FM Towns. To be called **EA Victor**, the new venture will be headquartered in Tokyo and will eventually publish original titles for the Japanese market, as well as translations of EA products. Steve Salyer, an experienced EA executive who used to live in Asia, will serve as chairman of the new venture and Satoshi Honda, a VMI director, will serve as president and CEO of the company.

Electronic Arts is not only gaining an indigenous marketing partner by joining with VMI, but the new venture also creates a strategic alliance which Larry Probst (president and CEO of Electronic Arts) states "will allow both companies to exploit emerging technologies." CGW

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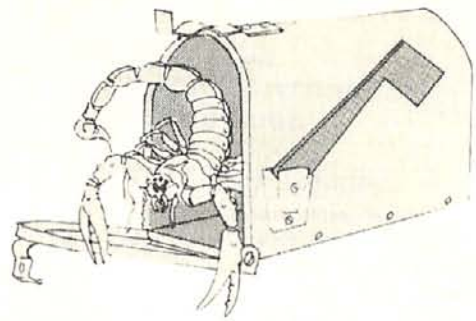
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Scorpion's Mail



- Darkseed ■ Legend of Kyrandia
- Dagger of Amon-Ra ■ Magic Candle II
- Indiana/Atlantis ■ Ultima Underworld
- Ultima VII ■ Eye of Beholder II
- Dark Queen of Krynn

I know, I know...we promised to make some extra room back here. Actually, we're always promising that, but somehow something else always comes up, and there's never enough time to get on with moving out some of the mail sacks. We will get around to it one of these days; in the meantime, remember not to sit up fast, or your skull will have a brief and meaningful relationship with the ceiling.

Since last time, **Activision** has released a second collection of old **Infocom** text adventures, *Lost Treasures of Infocom, Volume II*. However, so far as I know, this is available only for the Mac at the current time, and I have no information as to whether an MSDOS (or other) version will show up in the future. If you want to see it for your machine, be sure to send in those cards and letters to **Activision** and ask for it.

Based on what I've heard from Mac owners, you may have a little harder time with the second collection: it doesn't come with a hint book or set of maps. Fortunately, if you get stuck, you can always send me a letter, or order one of the older back issues that has a Tale on the game (who knows, if there is enough demand, maybe we'll reprint some of those older Tales).

Finally, before getting to the good stuff, I'd like to thank everyone who responded to my editorial on the breakneck pace of technology in the issue before last. All who wrote to me agreed that matters had gotten out of hand; even those who disagreed with some of my comments still felt things had gone too far, too soon. Now, if you'd just send those same letters to the game companies, they might actually start listening for a change. Okay, on to the mailbags!

Darkseed: This game can be difficult because so much depends on trial and error, with many points often obscured until too late. In one instance, a very important item is to be found in the library, but only if you happen to run the cursor across it, since the object itself is virtually impossible to see. So those of you having a hard time getting out of the dark world jail need to restore the game and see what you can turn up near the librarian in the real world.

Legend Of Kyrandia: This is another adventure where trial and error plays a large part. Some people have been having problems with the birthstone puzzle. This one's not really much of a puzzle. Just collect all the stones you can, save the game, and keep trying until you find the stones that work. There's really no other way to get the job done.

Dagger of Amon-Ra: Act V comes as a surprise to a lot of folks, since they don't expect it to start right off with Laura being chased by the killer. Not only is this upsetting, but one wrong move can bring the game to an untimely end. Moving fast is a necessity here. So is moving to the armor room and beyond (don't forget about that chair next to the locked door; it's there for a purpose). That should put you on the right track towards escape.

Magic Candle II: Getting out of the treasure trove is a problem for some people. There's no handy door, for one thing. Or is there? Perhaps if you seek a light to the west, you'll be able to twist your way around and get out.

Indy/Atlantis: In the depths (inner ring) of Atlantis, there's a giant machine, and some would like to know just how to make it move. A good thing to know, too, since you can't get much further along without a ride. First off, you only need two levers, not three. Then take a good look at the floor, and the wall outside. That ought to get you moving. And for those who are having trouble with the final alignment of stones in the frog statue room, ya missed something in the lava area, something really big.

Ultima Underworld: Some folks have gotten almost to the end of the dungeon here, and are stumped by Garamon's questions. Well, the first one is a little tricky, since you have to answer in the singular, not plural, and the word you want isn't "artifact" (that trips up a lot of people). Then you get to the second question, about a power source. That one's easier, just think about where you are.

Ultima VII: A little clarification needs to be made on how to get to the main path through the game. It isn't enough to just bop up to the monastery at Yew. The real first step is talking to the gypsies outside Minoc. This will set you up for the rest of it. My apologies to those who went haring off up north and didn't get anywhere (oops!).

Eye Of The Beholder II: In one part of the game, there's a room with some plates on the floor, a couple of teleporters, and some niches on each side that are blocked off by force fields, and this place is driving some people crazy. Hint: there's no way that *you* are getting past those force fields. That doesn't mean something else can't. Those teleporters are there for a reason, after all. Now do something with the plates, and see if you can figure out the whole pattern. Once you're on to the trick, it's not hard.

Dark Queen of Krynn: Once you've done the lighthouse and the tombs at Kristophan, it isn't exactly obvious where to go next. The best thing is to go visit those "friendly" Elves, the Hulderfolk. Not that you'll have a fun time with them (they just won't leaf you alone, so to speak), but it's a start. Then you might want to wander down towards New Aurim, which should put you on the proper track.

Well, that's about it for this look into the mailbag. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi, visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie, stop by the Games Roundtable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By U.S. Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States):

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Until next time, happy adventuring!

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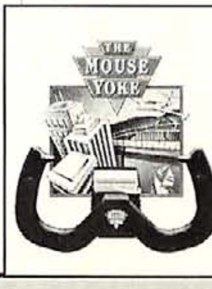


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Circle Reader Service #110



Behind in the Polls

Your "Top 100" poll lost all credibility when it ranked *Aces of the Pacific* as the third best game around. As your review in issue #98 correctly pointed out, the game has serious problems, namely its frame rate and sound. What gives?

C.B. Blackard
Conway, AR

Woodrow Wilson's father, a Presbyterian minister, was said to have been criticized for having the finest fed and best-groomed horse in the county, while being less well-dressed himself. The answer was simple, according to the oft-quoted anecdote, "I take care of my horse," said Rev. Wilson, "while my people take care of me." In the case of the "Top 100," the simple answer is: "We take care of the reviews, our readers take care of the ratings." Two possibilities come to mind: 1) either the readers simply liked the game better than our reviewer (it's not the first time and we don't expect it to be the last) or 2) the readers are happy with the patch which came out after the review was printed.

RUSH to Judgment

Let me start by saying that *Computer Gaming World* is the only computer magazine that I currently read. This has been the case on and off for numerous years, through Apples and Amigas and finally, now, on MS-DOS. I find the reviews thoughtful, typically accurate and well-written. The previews your magazine presents offer the information that I am interested in, rather than harping on the graphics or sounds (not that those don't hold any of my attention).

But I must finally get off my chest what has bothered me for some time. I believe in the 1st Amendment. I believe that you can run your magazine in whatever fashion you see fit. But I also believe that in the same sense that a bird shall not teach lessons in barking, *Computer Gaming World* should not belabor its readers with its political views. Since your magazine does have a tight focus (entertainment software) and increasing success (the last issue numbering 160 pages), why do you find it necessary to label certain games "Politically Correct?"

My beliefs about the above-named phrase would be inappropriate to list, just as it is inappropriate for you to do. Its use has darkened the pages of your magazine for the last year or so, at least once an issue (approximately). Do you truly find it necessary to point out any slight reference to environmental concern "Politically Correct?" Regardless of the answer, the review of *Global Effect*, written by M. Evan Brooks, far surpassed anything you or your writers have done on the subject to date. His rambling tirade of offensive ideas (most plagiarized from popular talk-show host Rush Limbaugh) caused me to put down the issue and consider tossing it away. I didn't, but refused to complete the article.

Your quoting of bible passages, while surprising, were always done with grace. You didn't force it down the readers' throats (I didn't take notice until a letter referring to it was printed) and I have tolerance for whatever beliefs you hold. But the magazine does not deal with political fads or buzz words, so their use is out of place and disjointing.

I will continue to read your magazine, regardless of your political views. The quality is constant and the writing, for the most part, excellent. It is just disappointing to see the magazine that I look forward to more than any other, sucker punch me at least once an issue. You won't change anyone's opinion with the "Politically Correct" jibes, and might bias the readers' views of the game. Perhaps, I would have loved *Global Effect*, but I no longer trust Mr. Brooks. Nobody reads *Computer Gaming World* for new insights into political concepts. You and your staff are doing everyone involved a tremendous disservice with preaching about such issues.

Jeffrey Morris
San Francisco, CA

Frankly, Jeffrey, neither M. Evan Brooks nor our editor would be caught dead listening to Rush Limbaugh. Mr. Brooks did not tag the article with the headline in question, but our liberal editor approved the headline for a very specific reason. Judging from your letter, his theory almost worked. Though the majority of the editorial staff is concerned about environmental issues (and considered "Environmentalist Wackos" by the lone Limbaugh fan on our staff), we feel that unscrupulous marketing departments have a tendency to simultaneously sensationalize and trivialize authentic issues in order to sell computer software. The headline was approved because we sincerely felt that Global Effect *was both a very poor game, in general, and used ecological issues in more of an exploitative than useful manner. We think that if you had finished reading the review, you would have understood our point.*

As for other uses of "politically correct" in our magazine, we believe that you have jumped to a conclusion. Some uses, written by our token right-winger, have been exactly as you thought they were intended. On the other hand, our too-liberal-for-the-Democratic Party and "Let's get rid of the two-party system!" editor often uses the word to describe those nescient types who take a political position because it's fashionable rather than because they truly believe in it. He thinks there are PC right-wingers (particularly among the doctrinaire rightists) as well as left-wingers. So, he doesn't react quite as negatively to the term as you have.

Finally, we must completely disagree with your assertion that we need to stick to computer games and avoid political references. We make reference to religion, literature, film, art, stage, social movements, politics, science and music of all sorts in order to communicate the importance of computer games. Those references to art and music are not always directly related to the way something is executed in a computer game program, either. Sometimes, they are made to convey a mood or develop an ambiance for the discussion of a computer game's performance and potential.

Our editor was questioned about his approach to SimCity *in* The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook *(where he refused to take out his "PC" anti-nuclear stance, by the way). He felt that the history of city planning and reality checks against real urban problems had to be included in order to create a companion book that was more than a hint book. Not only has the book been used as a resource by a civic safety committee and an environmental consulting firm for a public utility in Southern California, but it has been used in college classrooms as a textbook. Yet, people said, "It's just a game."*

Can we really say that something is "just a game" or shouldn't we say that while games are produced to be entertaining, they sometimes teach valuable lessons we aren't expecting? At Computer Gaming World, *we use a diverse spectrum of writers and we have a variety of political ideologies within our editorial construct. Any attempt to read one political ideology into our editorial voice is definitely, at least in our view, a misunderstanding.*

Top 100 Blues

Is there an error in your list of the "Top 100" games? Ever since I've subscribed, a mediocre, outmoded game, Battlehawks 1942, has maintained the near identical score and position, while other, newer games have come and gone. Has there been a glitch in your numbers or am I out of touch with modern gamedom.

Oh, yeah! Love your magazine and literally, count the days till the issue arrives. (Yes, I have a life.)

Dave Morris
Sandusky, OH

Since the "Top 100" ratings are cumulative and only change (in score) whenever the game in question is one of the 40 rated in a given month, it is not unusual to see a game sit in roughly the same spot with the same rating for quite a while. Usually, a game as old as BH 1942 is not re-rated unless another game ties with it. Then, we re-rate it to break the tie. We wouldn't say you are "out of touch" with modern gamedom (after all, you love our magazine), but what the BH 1942 anamoly does tell you is that the game still has (or had, at the last time it was re-rated) a solid core of adherents and our readers believe that it is still, even with its outmoded graphics, one of the top 100 games available.

Blood and Guts

In response to your recent editorial about graphic violence in *Wolfenstein 3-D*, please consider this: Violence is the central theme in all wargames. For example, in *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, say you make a head-on pass at a B-17, damage it, but do not knock it down. What have you just done? Maybe this (from *Flying Forts* by Martin Caidin):

"B-17 Tinkertoy ground-looped just off the runway. Tinkertoy had her nose shot out and the pilot had his head blown off by a 20-mm cannon shell. There was hardly a square inch of the entire cockpit that was not covered with blood and brain tissue. One half of his face and a portion of his cervical vertebra were found just in front of the bomb bay. The decapitation was complete." This is one example of many I could cite.

I'm not condemning violence in games — far from it. I like violent games. I am condemning an attitude that says it's okay to maim and kill at long range, as long as we do not have to see the results of our handiwork. Why do you think there are so many air, tank and ship combat simulators and so few infantry ones? That's because GIs kill individually and personally and we might just see some blood and flying body parts (incidentally, *Wolfenstein 3-D* left out grenades, I wonder why). I applaud *Wolfenstein 3-D*'s daring to attempt to bring home some of the reality and horror of war.

Larry Smith
Monroe, TN

Fortunately, only a small minority of readers understood the two editorials on violence as you seem to have interpreted it. The point was not *that long-distance violence was okay, while close-up violence was reprehensible. The editor was expressing his viewpoint that the new possibilities for graphic presentation of violence are so much more realistic that we need to rethink the "Why?" behind the game designs. The editorials stated that there should be a reason for violence (and, hopefully, a very good one) when it is used and that effective game designs should have some non-violent solutions, also.*

The editorials did not state that games should only have non-violent solutions nor that they should have less violence. They were concerned about realistic graphics with unrealistic me-

chanics (unlimited ammunition, unclear objectives and the capacity to shoot everything in sight without penalties) and results (bloodless disappearing bodies and multiple lives). We think Wolfenstein 3-D *is an awesome experience in much the same way you do, but we think it could be a better game with NPCs that you didn't want to kill or that you had to decide whether to trust or not. We think that games with violence ought to show more than just violence.*

MeSsy-DOS

I'm writing to respond to Scorpia's opinion piece in the October issue of *Computer Gaming World*, in which she rails against the very real frustrations of trying to get a game to run on a DOS machine.

I wish I could say that I knew exactly how she felt ... except I don't. I have an Amiga 1000 bought in 1985 and a Macintosh II I bought in 1988, and just about any game for each of those computers will run on it. I need only look at the "system requirements" sticker on the package to determine whether a game is one of the few ones that won't run on the computer I have. And I challenge you to find a DOS game — regardless of what system enhancements the DOS computer has — that sounds looks, and plays better than a good Amiga game. (The Macintosh games are looking pretty good, too.)

So, the golden days of glitch-free gaming aren't gone — it's just that they exist outside the DOS world that Scorpia (and other *CGW* contributors) too often take to be the alpha and the omega of computer gaming. (Take off those blinders, okay?)

I was particularly taken by Scorpia's comments about the tendency of game companies to substitute artwork and great graphics for good game play. It's the eternal content vs. presentation, substance vs. flash battle that will be with us as long as humankind has any kind of art. We see this same battle in the arenas of film ("Can you say 'special effects?'"), literature, theater, music and every other artistic form. So, I applaud her concern, and I hope that *CGW* keeps such concern visible in its pages so that game companies can't say that gamers are satisfied with the status quo.

Gregg Williams
Santa Clara, CA

In answer to your challenge to find a DOS game that plays better than an Amiga game, how about Wing Commander *(MS-DOS) versus* Wing Commander *(Amiga)?* Sid Meier's Civilization*? In answer to your charge that our editorial staff and contributors wear blinders, please note that 82% of total disk-based sales in 1991 were DOS titles, while Macintosh (8%) and Amiga (5%) lagged behind (from the SPA's recreational software research report). Frankly, as we have said on numerous occasions, it is impossible to cover games that do not exist (it's hard enough to cover those that are late, <grin>). The heavy MS-DOS emphasis in* CGW *merely reflects the realities of the market.*

Y'all Come Back Now, Y'hear?

Every month, I am just more and more impressed with your magazine. This month's issue was your best, yet. Every article was very informative and covered a wide range of games. (It also didn't hurt that I have a birthday this month!) Y'all are the greatest. Y'all's "tried and true" beats their "new and improved" any day.

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Circle Reader Service #62



Flight Simulator Dreams

by Timothy L. Trimble

The report from your wing man is that you've got smoke pouring out from the left engine. The enemy has just forced you into a five G. turn. You feel the pressure on your chest as you look left and scan the ground, watching for SAM launches. Your target rolls right as you pull back on the throttle, roll inverted, and hope that the target continues his turn. Looking up through the canopy toward the ground you see the enemy plane. Pulling back on the stick you bring the nose toward the target while adjusting the radar for a lock-on. As soon as you hear the solid tone in your ears, you pull the trigger, setting the AIM-9 missile free. Watching the trail of missile exhaust to the target, you scream an enthusiastic "Yeah" when the target explodes.

"Keep it down!" your wife shouts.

You remove the Sim Visor from your head, unzip the pressure vest, and then reply to your wife, "Whew, what a flight!"

Your wife takes the Sim Visor and sits in the flight chair.

"About time," she says. "I've been wanting to do some thermal soaring all afternoon."

Does this sound too futuristic? Not in our lifetime? Well, think again. The future is not too far away. With the technical advances in CD-ROMs, computer processing, video technology, "Virtual Reality" and sophisticated controls, the future as described above is just around the corner.

So what does this mean for the serious armchair pilot? Well, for example, take a look at the following list to see what is currently available in computer and software technology:

— 486 DOS compatible computer, running at 33 MHz or better
— 17 inch VGA (or Super VGA) monitor
— SoundBlaster card attached to stereo speakers (or headphones)
— Thrustmaster Weapons Control System (throttle) and Flight Control System
— Maxx rudder pedals
— **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Falcon 3.0*

With the above configuration any armchair pilot can experience the next best thing to sitting in an F-16 style military simulator. *Falcon 3.0* is a good example of how far the software technology has advanced toward providing a realistic representation of flight combat. *Flight Simulator 4* is also a good example of what can be done with software to create a realistic flying simulation. Realize also that when these products were on the drawing board, the rest of the world was still working with 286 based computers. This type of technology takes time to develop and the designers have to have an eye toward the near future technologies.

We are also beginning to see a new market in add-on products for flight simulations. There are various flight yokes, rudder pedals, control panels, throttle controls and flight planning/configuration software products available to fill the need for realism. Used in the correct configuration, these products can add a lot to the simulated flight experience. (Some have even built special chairs and compartments for their computers and attachments in an attempt to add realism.)

So, with these current technologies and the trend towards realism (or virtual realism), what can we expect to see in the near future? Well, we can only speculate, but we can do it with knowledge of current products. For example, *Falcon 3.0* is a recent release (Q4 1991). We can expect that it will be another two to three years before we see the next technological release of a new version of Falcon. So, what could we expect? How about 1024 different color shades on a monitor that supports 2048 by 2048 pixels. The program would have to come on the standard media of the time which would be CDs. With the graphic capabilities of the display and the higher speed of the CD and computing technology (Intel 686s?), the depicted aircraft of *Falcon 4* (5?) would be actual digitized photos. Add-on peripherals would include more realistic throttle and flight control devices. A more realistic rudder system will also be available. A set of goggles could also be plugged into the computer video board which would allow the wearer to view the screen from within the goggles. The goggles would also sense the movement of the head in relation to a sensor placed on top of the standard monitor, thus allowing the program to "sense" where the pilot is looking and scroll the goggles screen to the appropriate view. Four channels of sound will provide digitized voice, background music (CD quality of course), engine, wind, radio and instrument noise.

Another add-on product would be the pressure suit that squeezes the wearer during high G maneuvers. The real fun would come with the ability to connect to other Falcon systems via phone lines or networks. Although this feature already exists it could be greatly expanded to include connections to other types of aircraft or even be a part of a much bigger situation with ground troops calling for air support. For air combat these could be other F16s,

A-10s, AWACs, and other types of aircraft — not just with the ability to go head-to-head but with the ability to go squadron-to-squadron.

The next step of technology will most likely be in the area of virtual reality environments. No monitor, no keyboard or flight control sticks, just the goggles, and a full sensor equipped body suit. For example; you plug into the computer, turn on the environment, and become an actual part of the program. You will be able to see your hands interact with the virtual controls and yet feel the sensation of gripping controls in your hands. Your movement is more pronounced within your environment which even allows you to look down at your feet on the rudder pedals. With this much realism, the sensation of G forces and the destructive capabilities of your aircraft become more of an experience instead of a "fun" simulation. At this point, you may be a lot less willing to take simulated risks and experience a VR "crash."

There are bound to be a lot of social and moral questions that will be asked about the implications of Virtual Reality on reality itself. In other words, when does it become too real to still be fun? The educational aspect will also come into play and will allow higher levels of training before actually stepping into the aircraft. (Hum, think the FAA will finally approve *Flight Simulator* for recording flight time?)

As technology advances we will be around to see the changes and the implications. For now, though, all we can do is dream, speculate and enjoy the current offerings. Remember, it wasn't too long ago when you were playing *Flight Simulator* on a computer that had a single color (green), one floppy drive, and less than 64K of memory.

Once again this is Timothy Trimble, from the cockpit, flying a TRS-80 (Radio Shack) and saying, "So long, and keep the dreamy side up."

Products Mentioned:

Flight Simulator - **Microsoft Inc.**

Falcon 3.0 - **Spectrum HoloByte**

Thrustmaster Weapons Control System and Flight Control System - **Thrustmaster Inc.**

Maxx Rudder Pedals - **The Maxximum Company.** CGW

Poetry (continued from pg. 50)

A Bag Full of Rumors

Seems folks either love or hate the rumor guy!

The rumor guy is back!
And rumors are back on track!
The campaign was a bust,
His return was a must!
For a while, though, I thought he'd been sacked!
Martin Hrouat
Slidell, LA

There once was a man who wore a bag
And he wrote for a computer game rag.
Some hoped he was dead,
But he came back instead,
That irrepressible man with the bag.
Jonathon Barlow
Cave Junction, OR

CG-Dub had a news guy named Rumor,
Who covered his beat in good humor,
But the jokes he created
Were half-asphyxiated
In the masque of his grocery-bag tumor!
J. Antell
Los Angeles, CA

There once was a rumor guy,
Who wore a bag on his head.
Not only does his writing stink,
He was also born brain dead.
John Caspersen
Delray Beach, FL

Poet Laureates
(Our Favorites)

"Vice-Verse Ah!"
While playing Empire on my computa,
My wife entered the room in the nude, uh!
"Let's make love," she cried
To which I replied,
"Can't you wait? I'm invading Bermuda!"
Mitch Willis
Wetumpka, AL

"My Amiga Is . . ."
...omnipotent.
It always knows the square root of 193
And how to spell onomatopoeia.
...all powerful.
It organizes my life, helps me write and entertains me.
...addictive.
It calls to me at night: "Don't just lie there you worm!
You haven't conquered the 67th level on Lemmings, yet.
What are you, a man or a mouse?"
...cold and impersonal.
It expects me to understand every nuance of its language
But makes no effort to learn mine.
...spiteful.
It broke down while I was writing this.
Erle Mundle
Oromolto, New Brunswick, CAN

"With Apologies to Walt Whitman"
I sing the war games electric,
The armies of those I fight engirth me and I engirth them,
The AIs will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
And defeat them, and charge them full with the charge of the role.
Bob Olivere
Phoenix, AZ



Circle Reader Service #113

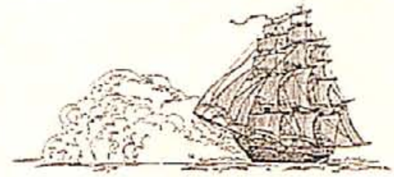
COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

" I Came, I Played, I Conquered"

Computer Wargaming World

Broadsides & Gripeshot

by Alan Emrich



While it is a singular honor to have this forum in which to express my views concerning computer wargaming (an action often greeted around the office with "Oh, no. What's Alan on a tirade about *this* month?"), words are never enough. Since I'm not a politician, it is not sufficient for me to complain about this while promising that while, after being granted the imperium, ultimately, doing nothing. After some introspection (and a quick "reality check"), I'd like to bounce an idea off the faithful computer wargaming multitudes out there who read this column.

Recently, I've received a change in title here at *Computer Gaming World* magazine. The switch from Assistant Editor to "On-Line Editor" was merely making a title which more accurately reflected my job description. (I'll still be the editor of the *Computer Wargaming World* section of this magazine). With our growing popularity on the Prodigy Services Network and constant monitoring of networks such as GEnie and CompuServe, I became the de facto "communications officer" (though I can't sing like Lt. Uhura). I've met many of our readers through e-mail and bulletin boards on-line and really love serving our readers there.

Being a wargamer, naturally, I tend to check with special interest all of the topics on war and strategy games on every network. Being a true "multi-network user," I'm in the fortunate position of being able to see larger trends which occur commonly on each network. Interestingly enough, one positive trend I see is the strong, continuing growth of war and strategy gaming tournaments on all the networks.

Why not a CGW sponsored national strategy gaming tournament?

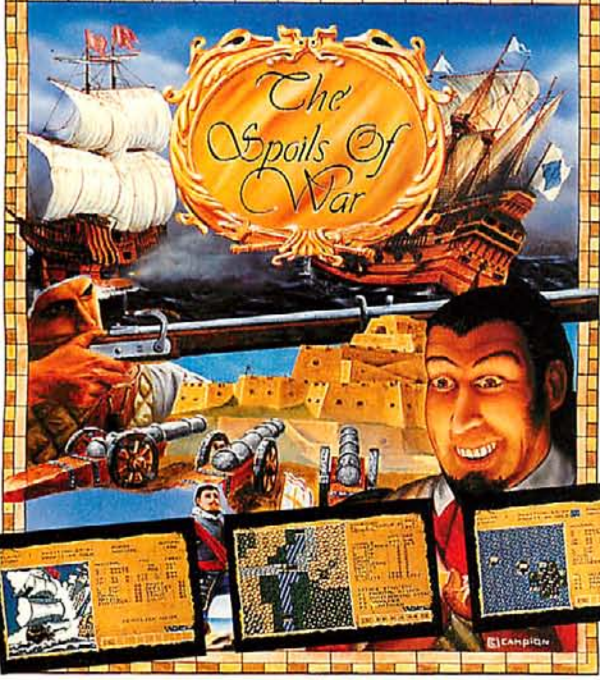
While I have proffered my advice to many of the individual tournament organizers, I always felt a little guilty because, ultimately, *they* were doing the real work and helping their fellow gamer. I would, for instance, tell the likes of Robert E. Lee, Jr. (his real name, by the way), who organized the *Command HQ* tournament on PRODIGY how that same event was structured by Frank "Turk" Bartolotta on CompuServe. Sharing information while always wishing that I could arrange a match between the best from all the various networks.

Then it hit me (ouch!). Why not stick my neck out and moderate a truly national, multi-network tournament of some popular war or strategy game? Through the good graces of this magazine, the winners of each round and their opponents could be posted in these pages (along with any player anecdotes). A single-elimination tournament with 64 players would take six months to complete (at one game per month/issue, per player), with the winner announced seven months after the event commences. With some company "sanctioning" of whatever game was chosen for this event, it could truly be a national event (possibly with some kind of spiffy prize offered, to boot!).

To make it easier for me to organize, however, I'd want every player to be on one of the networks where I could send them e-mail (my preferred method of communication). Players would have to agree to participate in, at least, one play-by-modem game per month (as long as they are winning, that is), which means there will be some probable (but not unduly high) long distance calling expenses involved. Still, it could be a lot of fun. Even those not directly participating should enjoy reading about it and keeping up with the event. I'd like *your* opinion, however, so write me. I can be reached on GEnie or America On-Line at [CGW], on CompuServe at [76703,622] and Prodigy at [EXPT40B].

Next issue, watch this column for a fascinating interview with SSG's Roger Keating, who has the dirt on the Carriers at War Scenario Editor, War*lords 2* and *The Road to Appomatox*! CGW

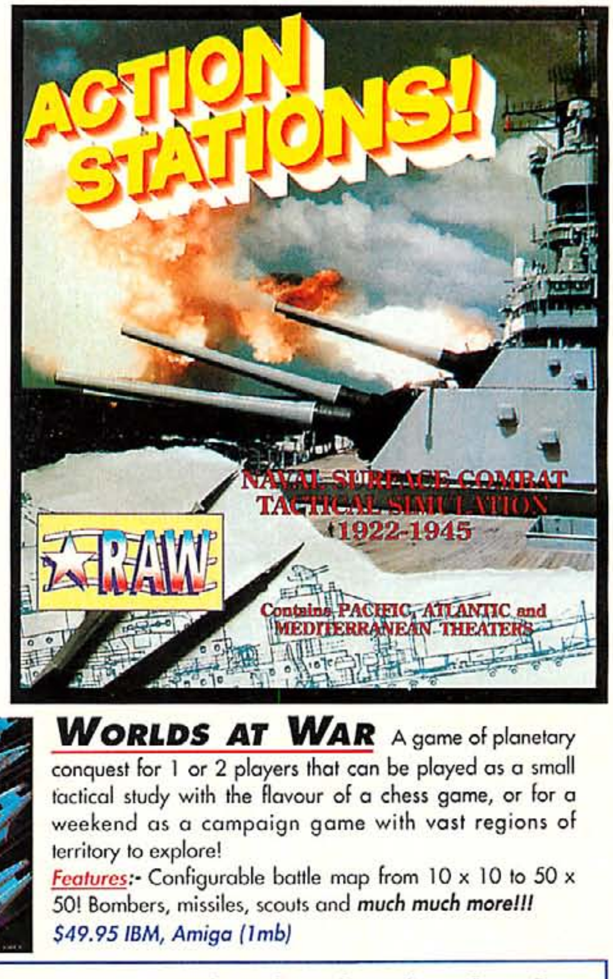
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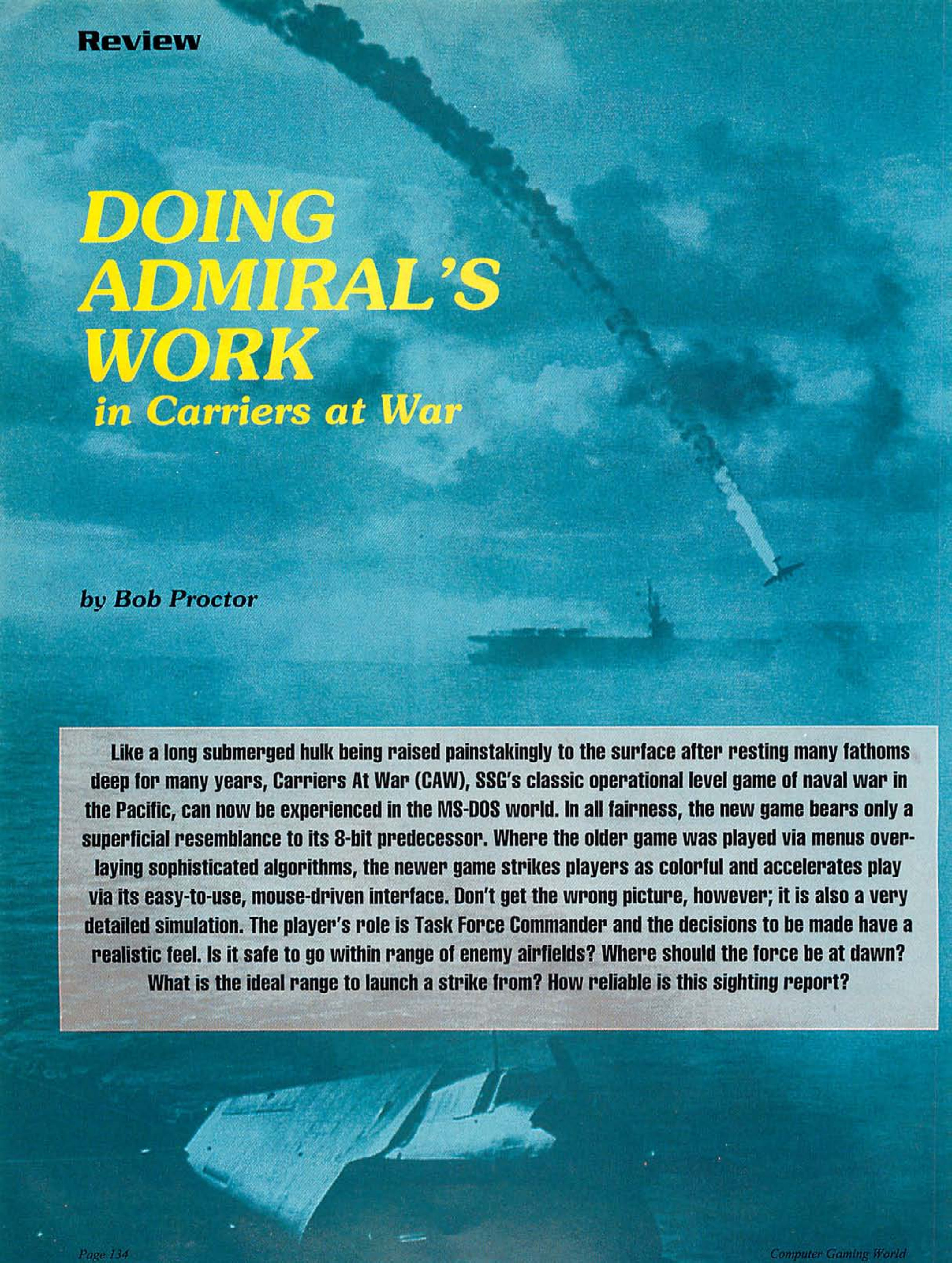
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Circle Reader Service #127



DOING ADMIRAL'S WORK
in Carriers at War

by Bob Proctor

Like a long submerged hulk being raised painstakingly to the surface after resting many fathoms deep for many years, Carriers At War (CAW), SSG's classic operational level game of naval war in the Pacific, can now be experienced in the MS-DOS world. In all fairness, the new game bears only a superficial resemblance to its 8-bit predecessor. Where the older game was played via menus overlaying sophisticated algorithms, the newer game strikes players as colorful and accelerates play via its easy-to-use, mouse-driven interface. Don't get the wrong picture, however; it is also a very detailed simulation. The player's role is Task Force Commander and the decisions to be made have a realistic feel. Is it safe to go within range of enemy airfields? Where should the force be at dawn? What is the ideal range to launch a strike from? How reliable is this sighting report?

CAW uses simultaneous movement with a continuous clock. Players can intervene to review the status or change orders but frequent intervention is not needed. The game can be played against another human or the computer but the emphasis is on solitaire play. The computer is a very able opponent (more on this in a bit) and a solitaire game is more interesting because ships, planes, and sightings (which are hidden in two-player mode) appear on the screen. An option for modem or network play would be very desirable but is not present.

Clear The Decks For Action

Where the ancestor of *CAW* used menus and reports to inform the player of his/her successes, the latest design uses lavish graphics to portray visually what its progenitor offered largely in text form. If Dauntlesses attack the Akagi, the player sees an accurate drawing of the ship and watches the bombs hit, the splashes of near misses, a plane going down in flames, and torpedoes racing through the sea to the target. The graphics are abstract; they are not one person's point of view but the collected reports of many. By counting hits, the player has a good idea of how bad the damage is. Watching *CAW* play out is like watching a movie that can be interrupted for new orders.

There are six scenarios; after choosing one, the player sees all of the commanders of naval forces and land-based air. There are as many as four commanders a side. Each can be controlled by human or computer but once the game begins, this can't be changed.

The screen is 80% map with a menu bar across the top and a "control panel" on the right. The latter presentations consist of two large buttons showing the US and Japanese flags and indicators to call one's attention to certain events. Each side is warned when: enemy aircraft are sighted; an enemy task force is sighted, and a new report comes in for an existing sighting. Players can tell the clock to stop automatically when any of these events occur. There is also a warning indicator for surface combat. Only one is needed since both sides have to give orders when this occurs.

Seek and Ye Shall (Usually) Find

CAW gives the player control over searching without the need for constant orders. Each base or carrier has a compass on which the player clicks to show the direction(s) to search. If done in the middle of the night, search planes will launch at dawn. If a task force is discovered, the plane will automatically shadow it and new planes sent out to finish the search and relieve the spotter. The player just sits back and watches the sightings come in. Although aircraft can only find the enemy by day, submarines, coast watchers and surface units provide occasional sightings at night.

Of course, one can't believe most of these reports! *CAW* does a great job recreating the inaccuracy of sightings. Subsequent reports on the same sighting become more reliable so there is a strong desire to wait for better reports. Such delays are often fatal, but the same can be true when players become too aggressive and send all their planes after the wrong target. *CAW* does NOT allow strikes in the air to be redirected — they must be recalled and sent out again. This seems historically reasonable. For instance, in the Eastern Solomons battle, the USN sent a strike after the light carrier Ryujo and then tried — unsuccessfully — to redirect it when bigger targets were spotted.

Combat Air Patrol (CAP) is also hassle-free. One designates the number of planes to use and the computer will launch at dawn, keep most of the planes in the air and refuel them as needed. When there is a warning of approaching bogies, the Emergency CAP button will get every available fighter up.

Attacking is done by clicking the "Strike" button and selecting a target. The player sees a screen that shows which squadrons are available and can reach the target. Planes will arm automatically but one must remember that torpedo bombers only carry bombs at extended range. It is often best to wait and close on the target until these planes are able to carry torpedos.

CAW includes a surprisingly good simulation of surface combat. All those IJN cruisers and destroyers armed with Long Lance torpedoes represent a real threat to the U.S. and often cause early withdrawal when one more strike would finish off some cripples. Differences in gun and torpedo ranges are taken into consideration. The range at contact depends on visibility, and getting caught in torpedo range at night can be a disaster for the USN, as it was at Savo Island.



TITLE:	Carriers At War
SYSTEM:	MS-DOS
PROTECTION:	None
# PLAYERS:	1 or 2, same computer only
PRICE:	$70.00
DESIGNERS:	Roger Keating and Ian Trout
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Studies Group (American office) 8348 Monticello Drive Pensacola, FL 32514 (904) 494-9373

Submarines are another pleasant surprise. The Display Submarines command displays the location of every friendly sub. They move and attack independently, giving sighting reports and inflated claims of enemy ships sent to the bottom. Still, not a game goes by without a cruiser or oiler being picked off. The possibility that it might be a 170 point carrier next time means no game is over until the very end.

I'm On A Mission From Nimitz!

CAW has a realistic feel because all operations take place within a strategic context. This means one side has a mission to perform whose successful completion will win at least a marginal victory. It might be unloading "cargo points" (representing an invasion or a supply mission) or it might be bombardment of a key enemy base. No matter what, it forces the other side to come out and engage.

Victory is determined by points, which one gets for sinking ships, destroying aircraft, and completing missions. No points are awarded for damage; so protecting the cripples is important! There are also Victory Conditions which limit the degree of a victory; usually they serve to keep either side from sacrificing too many carriers.

The scenarios are:

Pearl Harbor — Dec. 7, 1941

This battle serves mostly as a tutorial. The IJN carriers are in position to launch a surprise raid on Hawaii. Obviously, it is an easy way to learn the mechanics of air strikes. It is also interesting to take the US side and see how much damage can be inflicted.

Coral Sea — May 3-5, 1942

The IJN has two missions: resupplying the Solomons and invad-

ing New Guinea. They don't have many aircraft left, but their planes and pilots are better than those of the allies. There are several possible strategies for both sides.

Midway — June 4-6, 1942

Here, the IJN has the advantage of both quantity and quality. It is not too hard for the U.S. to win decisively by closely following Spruance's historical actions. Whoever ends up with control of the skies over Midway will win.

Eastern Solomons — August 22-24, 1942

This is the most evenly balanced of all the scenarios. Each side has 3 carriers and naval air strength is just about even. The U.S. has more fighters and the IJN has more bombers. The IJN can deliver 12 cargo points to Guadalcanal to win if the US doesn't challenge.

Santa Cruz — October 25, 1942

Once again, the IJN is resupplying Guadalcanal. Only this time the U.S. is down to just two carriers and losing both means a decisive win for the Japanese!

Philippine Sea — June 18-20, 1943

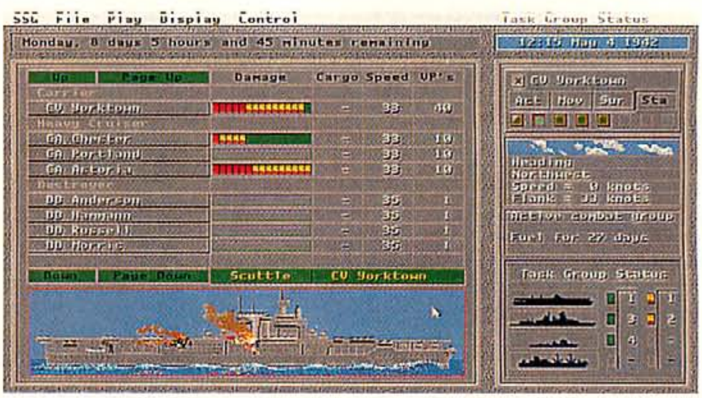
US carriers are plentiful now and the pilots and planes are strong enough to attack land bases. For the IJN to win, they must distract the Americans with tempting surface targets and get in a strike without retaliation.

Medals For Good Conduct

The quality of the computer opponent is a strength of *CAW*. It's tactics are unpredictable. Sometimes it will close the range and sometimes stay away. Sometimes it will launch unescorted strikes at long range; at other times it will wait until it can send every plane. It can even try a sneaky trick like launching in the evening when planes must return after dark! It handles its carriers very well and forces the player to make decisions for reasons that are historically accurate.

However, a person still makes a better opponent. The computer has trouble when completed missions and coordinated attacks are needed to win. Here's an example: in the Santa Cruz scenario, the U.S. can win a marginal victory by sending all its ships home, leaving only the aircraft at Henderson Field to defend the Solomons! If a human plays the Japanese, they will pound Henderson and land most or all of their cargo points to win. The computer, in three tries, has not been able to do this. Players can try this for themselves by taking command of all IJN forces AND the U.S. carrier force. One can give the latter orders to return to Noumea and play the IJN for the rest of the game (the computer controls U.S. land-based air).

A game like *CAW* doesn't really seem complete without a



scenario editor. SSG knows this but they have decided to make it a separate product and promised it before the end of the year (darn, I forgot to ask what year!). A unique feature of *CAW*, which can't be evaluated until the editor comes out, is that the player will be able to use the editor to "program" the artificial intelligence for both sides. This will make it possible to edit existing scenarios and make variants with a more aggressive or more cautious opponent, as well as with alternate positions and forces. The option to randomly select from all the variations of a scenario already exists but, at present there are only two of each. The first is accurate historically and the second is an "interesting" variation. What that means will have to wait until we get the editor.

What Would I Add in the Next Version?

Allow the player to change the make-up of Task Forces and Groups. This is important in two ways. When a carrier is badly crippled, it can be detached and sent home with a destroyer escort. Secondly, the remnants of battered groups could combine to make a stronger unit for surface combat and air defense.

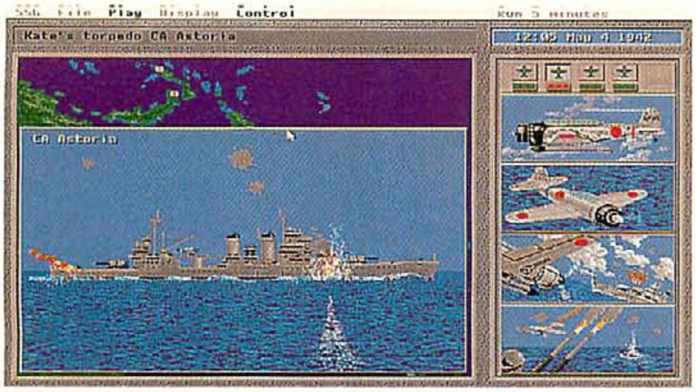
Some forces start a scenario with a mission to bombard an enemy base. If anything happens to this force, the player can't assign the mission to another group. Allow this.

Show secondary explosions graphically, just for the thrill of it.

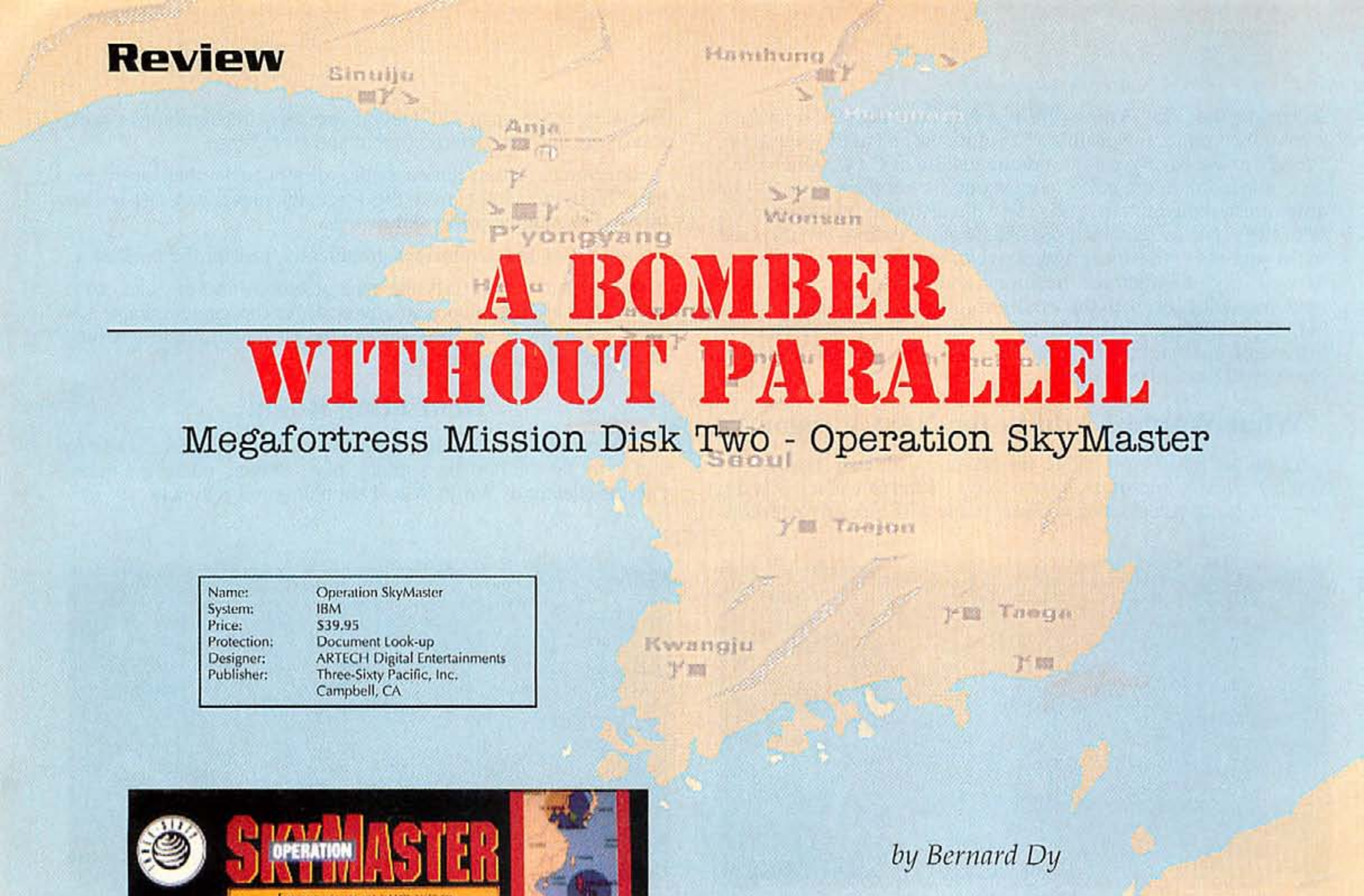
Make the player specify the type of bombs and the size of the load when arming planes in advance. As the game stands, it is much less risky to pre-arm because the player can't guess wrong, like Nagumo did at Midway.

Debriefing Room

CAW is the most accurate simulation of carrier warfare available and is by far the best for solitaire play. Players interested in the Pacific Theater of World War II should not miss it. **CGW**







A BOMBER WITHOUT PARALLEL

Megafortress Mission Disk Two - Operation SkyMaster

Name:	Operation SkyMaster
System:	IBM
Price:	$39.95
Protection:	Document Look-up
Designer:	ARTECH Digital Entertainments
Publisher:	Three-Sixty Pacific, Inc. Campbell, CA

by Bernard Dy



EXTERIOR: The camera pans across dark Pacific waters and, flying low, comes upon and pulls up to gain altitude while traveling across a Pacific island of obvious volcanic origin. As the camera angle tilts upward, it focuses upon a dot on the horizon. Then, it zooms to dot itself. Each increase in magnification bringing the EB-52 into clearer focus.

INTERIOR: Close-up shot of the navigator at his station. He is concentrating on the instruments in front of him. A set of orders rests beside him. Zoom into orders and focus on the acronym ROGAN.

SEGUE: Cut to film footage of bunker with multiple antennae. Use voice-over as of command officer explaining,

OFFICER: ROGAN — Radio Object-Guided Airburst Nuclear. What intelligence has confirmed is the most dangerous high explosive nuclear device ever held in the arsenal of our enemies. With the current instabilities in the North Korean government, I don't have to inform you gentlemen that a surgical strike is both necessary and desireable. We need the Old Dog.

INTERIOR: Shots of both the pilot and co-pilot at their stations with continuing voice-over.

OFFICER: We need the Old Dog ...

INTERIOR: Shot of ECM Officer with continuing voice-over.

OFFICER: and we need it with new tricks.

Such is the way a screenplay might unleash the drama to be found in *Operation SkyMaster*, the new mission disk which takes the EB-52 air crew to the Western Pacific. There, the Chinese have begun an offensive to overtake the Philippines and Korea. Adding potential holocaust to the ruthless nationalistic aggrandizement which sets the stage, the North Koreans have started development on the aforementioned ROGAN project. Naturally, the destruction of the ROGAN launch and research sites is the climax of the collection of missions. Somewhat mirroring real life, the Soviets are offering aid to the Americans and, in the final mission new Soviet weapons will be available for use against North Korea.

With *Operation SkyMaster*, as in *Operation Sledgehammer*, **Three-Sixty Pacific** continues to expand and reinvigorate the





Megafortress universe, much as they have continued to support the *Harpoon* gaming environment. One can almost imagine **Three-Sixty**'s CEO entering a briefing room in dress uniform with riding crop in hand and chewed-off cigar in his mouth. "Gentlemen!" he assertively begins, "we're going to string these products out … and sell 'em!" Since the scenario disks provide new campaigns for successful programs, while only adding about 2MB more to one's hardware capacity, this seems to be a welcome and successful marketing strategy.

Naturally, given the strategy of supporting an existing product with supplemental disks, *Operation SkyMaster*'s forte is not exciting new graphics or sound support. It does automatically update the game to version 1.2, but its authentic value is in the new scenarios and manual (offering maps, fiction passages to flavor the scenarios, and new weapon statistics). The interface is unchanged from the basic game, as is the sound support.

Although the mission disk updates the game to version 1.2, I was able to uncover a few infrequent but definite glitches. The **Three-Sixty** customer support line was usually busy, but when answered, correspondents were generally friendly and willing to help.

The plot is developed primarily by the documentation and brief mission introductions on-line. The final mission, Dragonslayer, is one of the longer missions, involving long range flight, refueling and arming at a Russian airbase, and traveling back to North Korea for the final strike. This mission is divided into segments connected by single screen story shots that give clues as to how to accomplish the mission. Like the Flight of The Old Dog mission in the original, Dragonslayer is a rigidly structured mission (part adventure game, part sim, really) that the player must figure out piecemeal.

The majority of missions are less structured and provide a variety of assignments and difficulty levels. Goals include the standard anti-radar and land attack objectives and a selection of anti-ship strikes. Strategies learned in the basic game will continue to prove useful in the completion of *Operation SkyMaster*. Ordnance disposition and fuel trade-offs are important as many of the assignments involve long distance strikes. Players will need to be adept at low level flying, radar jamming and evasion, ordnance delivery, and damage control. The Dragonslayer mission is particularly interesting, as the Megafortress will be able to use the Soviet AS-4B "Kitchen" missile. This weapon has a greater range than any other weapon offered in the basic game, and used properly can make life a little easier for the Megafortress crew, or at least instilling them with the bravery of being out of range.

I found *SkyMaster* (and *Megafortress* in general) to be a game which requires great patience. Unlike *Wing Commander* and *Aces of the Pacific*, the "warp speed" function in this software does not take the player immediately to the action. Even at the highest warp setting, the game seems to move slowly, and when the EB-52 finally approaches any adversaries, it is beset by SAMs, radar, enemy aircraft, and anti-aircraft fire, which sometimes give the impression of insurmountable odds. Even using the strategies offered in the basic game's manual sometimes proved futile. It would have been helpful had additional strategies been documented in *SkyMaster*'s manual. Most players would probably prefer a faster "autopilot" function, and a better balance of action. The *SkyMaster* package claims the mission disk "...demands the highest level of Megafortress mastery." This is quite accurate — practiced *Megafortress* players will receive the greatest value from this package, though some easy missions are also included.

The EB-52 seems hardly as stealthy as the documentation claims. Perhaps I needed more practice, but I rarely completed a mission without taking at least moderate damage. In most cases, the objective targets were successfully bombed, but trying to fly home on four engines usually resulted in a crash. Of course, this made hard-earned victories much more enjoyable.

There are some suggestions which **Three-Sixty** may want to consider. First, increase the size of target selection screens in the offensive and electronic warfare stations. Even with the "hot keys," finding targets, maneuvering the aircraft, managing damage control, and jamming multiple radars all at once proved to be an unwieldy task in the heat of battle. Second, imagine a LAN version of *Megafortress*! Up to five players could operate the *Megafortress*, each with his/her own station and responsibilities. The added social interaction, realism, communication and team management dynamics would make Megafortress an incredible package. (Some people already hook their computers up with null link modem cables, and play Falcon using voice-operated radio headsets to communicate from separate rooms. Long-distance teams can simply connect the software on one phone line and talk through another. Either way can be great fun!).

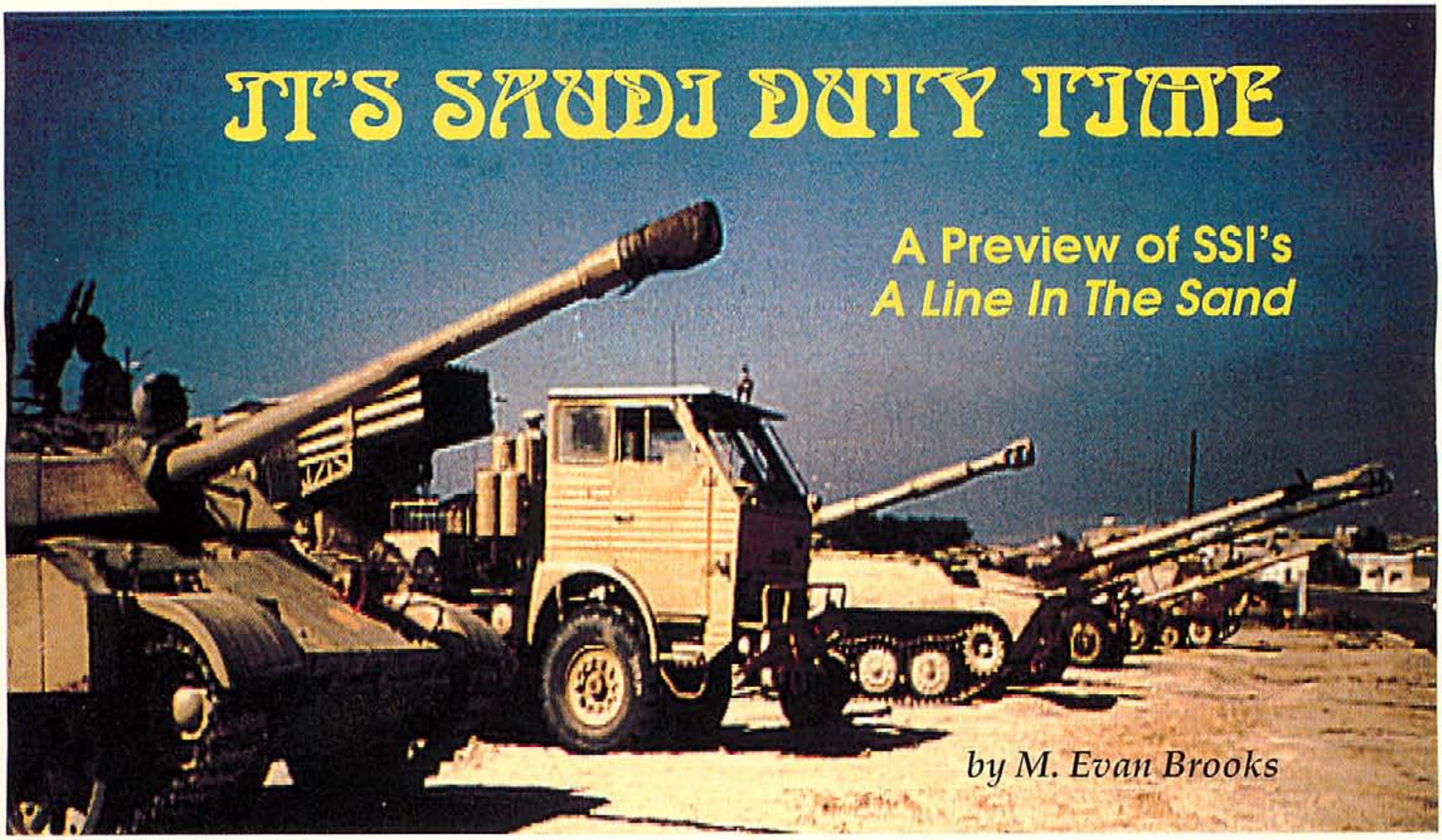
Since *Megafortress* lacks a scenario builder, enthusiasts will probably enjoy the amenities *SkyMaster* has to offer in the extra playability and interesting premise. As mission disks go, it meets basic requirements and offers good graphics and sound, considering the relatively light hard drive requirements. Strict fans of fighter simulators or those searching for the cinematic style of *Wing Commander* may not find SkyMaster enough reason to purchase the *Megafortress* package. Gamers interested in the unique style of simulation *Megafortress* offers are encouraged to ask their vendor for a demonstration.


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Circle Reader Service #64

It's Saudi Duty Time

A Preview of SSI's *A Line In The Sand*

by M. Evan Brooks



Captured Iraqi equipment from Desert Storm at Subhan, Kuwait City. Photo by author.

Due to be released by Thanksgiving, *A Line In The Sand* is **Strategic Simulation, Inc.**'s game of the Gulf War and potential Arab-Israeli conflicts, with the latter portion covered in both military and diplomatic modes.

The title itself derives from President George Bush's famous statement referring to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. However, since the Gulf War was "less" of a war than anticipated, the computer release postulates a more effective Iraqi military machine. In fact, the board game was initially released by **TSR** *before* hostilities commenced and modifications were made to the rules after the war was concluded. Thus, *Line* is a direct and almost literal translation of a "paper" wargame to the computer medium. An initial look at the product reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of such a translation.

Drawing the Line (Look and Feel)

The documentation is standard **SSI**. The game mechanics are succinctly and adequately explained and a text rendition of the map is on the back cover of the rules

TITLE:	A Line In The Sand
SYSTEM:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	0-6
PRICE:	$39.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-Up
DESIGNER:	Flint Dille, Lee Chin & David Landrey
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc. Sunnyvale, CA

booklet. No historical overview or player hints are given, but this reviewer was only able to see a rough draft of the manual.

The graphics are an exact translation of the board game. Utilizing area movement, the entire Middle East is divided into one hundred separate land and sea areas. The map rendition is somewhat generic with only major sites being defined and roads totally absent, e.g. Dhahran, Saudia Arabia is noted as a city hex, but not identified; similarly, KKMC (King Khalid Military City), an airbase of note in the war, is on the map but not identified. Bahrain, the island nation near Dhahran, is omitted altogether, as is TapLine Road. Thus, one may consider the map to be generic to the max.

Combat units are portrayed by appropriate silhouettes (e.g. a tank for armor, a soldier for infantry, etc.). Units represent divisions or corps (land), 3-4 squadrons (air), and battle/carrier groups (naval).

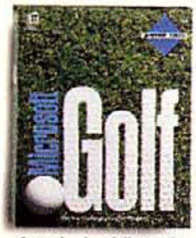
Sound effects include explosions and guns firing as well as the "whoosh" of air units returning to their bases. The sound is adequate, but the beta version became somewhat tedious. The designers have given their assurance that the sound will be appropriately shortened to yield a faster moving game.

The interface is keyboard or mouse-driven, and works smoothly. One accesses units and moves them to the destination. If it is enemy occupied, combat will occur in the combat phase. However, the beta version did have some cumbersome effects, e.g. one must choose a scenario and then exit. The designers plan to make the interface smoother and more "user-friendly."

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Circle Reader Service #108

Land combat units can move two areas per turn, naval units eight, while air units can traverse virtually the entire map. The game sequence of play is attack or move (player choice of order), although normally, one will opt to attack and then take advantage of any breakthroughs during the movement phase. Stacking is limited to two land units per area, while three air units may be located in a single airfield. Despite the air unit's range, one should move them to the front, since enemy air may be intercepted, but *only* by air units within three area spaces. Thus, if the air units are not moved forward, their interception capabilities will be severely limited.

The direct translation of board to computer does have some weaknesses. Air strikes undergo anti-aircraft fire, but each unit may undergo three separate fires and so, when multiple strikes are planned, the air offensive gives way to tedium. The designers have looked at the delay and have assured this reviewer that the entire air strike will be "cleaned up" in final release. Instead of single resolution, the entire anti-aircraft firepower will be resolved in a single combat resolution. Similarly, when air interceptions occur, the beta version randomly selected a defensive air unit. Randomization selected a helicopter unit to counter a Mig-25 when an F-15 was available. Fortunately, the released version should allow the player to allocate proper air units to air superiority versus ground support missions.

Sandblasting (Game Play)

Line is composed of three separate and distinct games — *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* (Basic Games I and II), potential Arab-Israeli conflicts (*Holy War*, *Israel Surrounded*) and the diplomatic game (with up to six players, each of whom has his own war aims to achieve — either by diplomacy or force, with victory generally being achieved ultimately by force of arms).



One of "a thousand points of light" burning from an oil fire southwest of Kuwait City. Photo by author.

Please note that throughout this preview, *Line* has been referred to as a "game." It is a "game," and not a simulation. The generic map and unit density makes *Line* an enjoyable game to play. It is a relatively easy game to play (being of beginner-intermediate difficulty), but any relation between *Line* and reality would have to be one of pure coincidence.

"An accurate simulation of the Gulf War would be a less-than-fascinating gaming experience."

The "Desert Shield/Desert Storm" scenarios allow one to examine what would have happened "if" the Iraqis had fought. Yet, the correlation of forces is such that units occupy all front areas — there is simply nowhere for a Coalition Force to flank the Iraqi line. Instead, one bludgeons an area free of defenders and then attempts to exploit the hole. If the game were not entitled *Line in the Sand*, one would be justified in assuming that the game could represent the German Army on the Marne in 1914.

Also, the game flows quickly. As the Coalition Forces break through Iraqi lines, one must ensure that no openings are allowed to the Iraqis. A one area opening can allow an Iraqi unit to penetrate the line, and if it seizes a single airbase and oil field, the Iraqi will secure victory. Is it realistic? No, but it does allow an Iraqi player a chance to win.

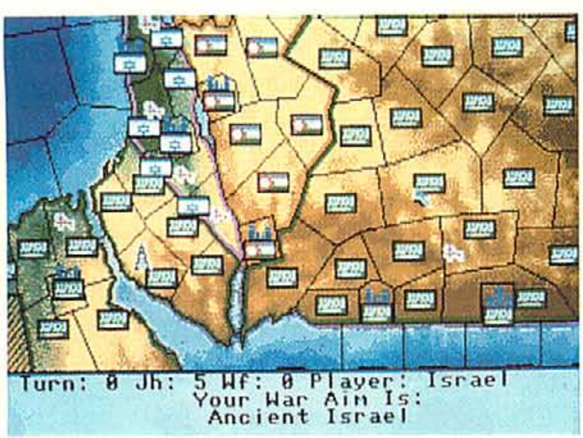
Chemical and nuclear weapons are optional, but Scud missiles are not. Militarily, the Scud missile was a disaster; however, politically, it was a success that compelled Coalition airpower to divert from more "essential" targets. Given the initial design date of the game, the Scud was an unknown entity, and it has no role herein.

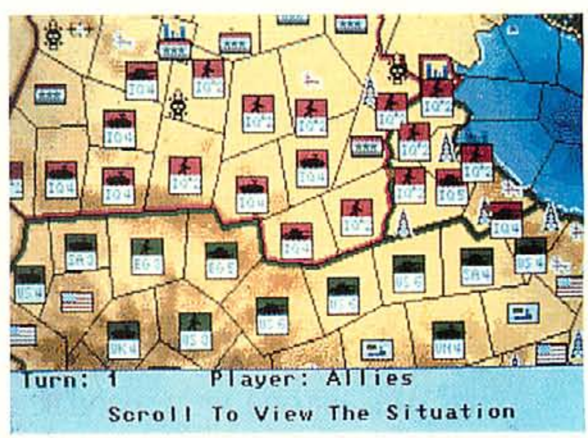
The title of *Line* suggests that the Gulf War is the crux of this game. Actually, the Israeli and diplomatic scenarios are more open-ended and interesting. While unit density is much more intensive in the latter scenarios and the human player will have an often interminable wait for his turn, these scenarios present more of a challenge.

Brine in the Sand (Conclusions)

Line is a "beer-and-pretzels" game — or more appropriately, since alcohol is forbidden in most of the Arab world, it is a "pretzels" game. Light entertainment that, like "non-alcoholic" beer, simply lacks the *gestalt* of reality.

As a participant in the Gulf War, this reviewer was interested in seeing its presentation as a wargame. Truthfully, there is little congruence. The "Hail Mary," the difficulties of maintaining the Coalition as a coherent force, the air war itself — these elements are lacking. Of course, then again, an *accurate* simulation of the Gulf War would be a less-than-fascinating gaming experience. CGW





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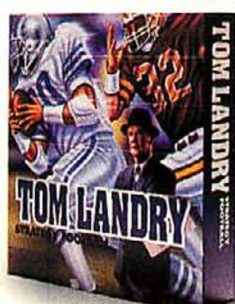


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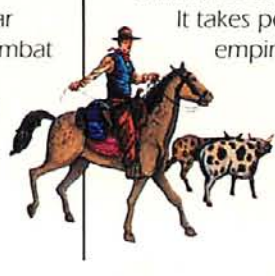
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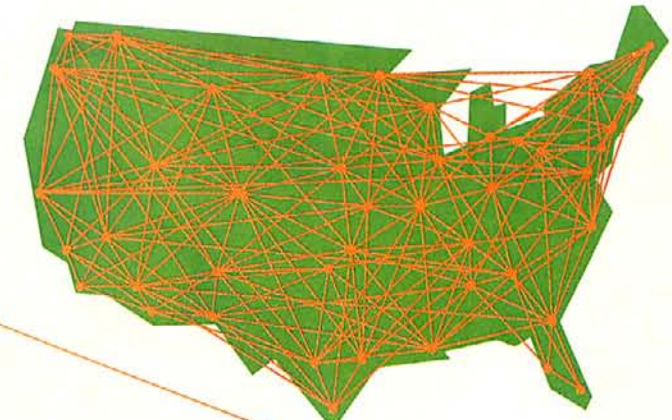
But, beware. Disasters like strikes, floods, and snow storms are right around the bend. It takes power, planning, and ambition to build a railroad empire and only the best will endure.





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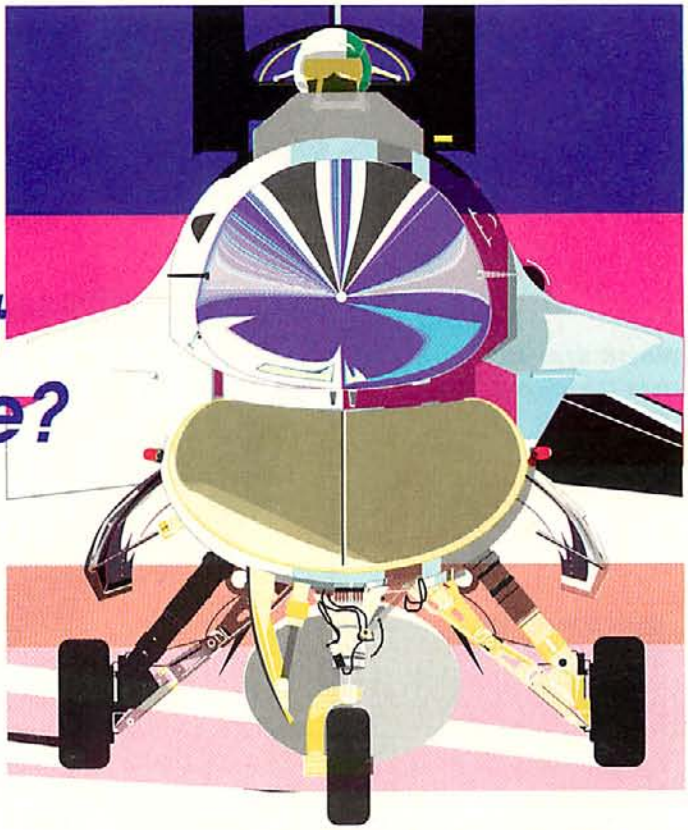
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What's New in Flight Hardware?

Brackets, Joysticks and Chairs, Oh My!

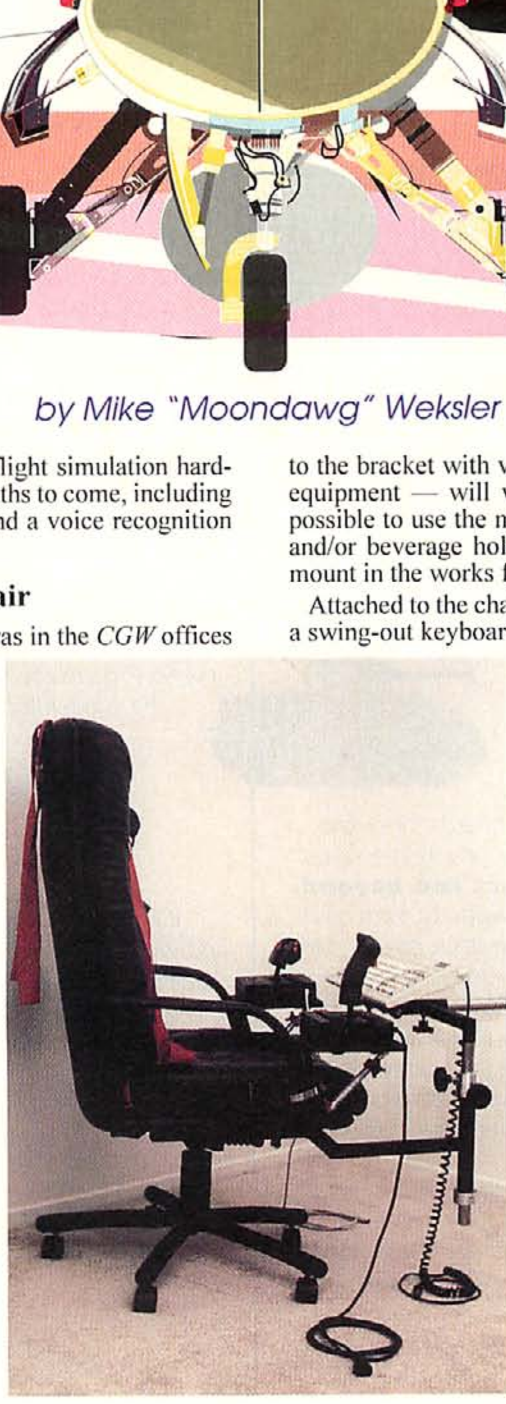
by Mike "Moondawg" Weksler

This article will discuss the latest in flight simulation hardware that will be available in the months to come, including a makeover for one's office chair, and a voice recognition system for air combat simulations.

The Flight SimChair

One day not too long ago, a gentleman was in the *CGW* offices assembling an office chair. Considering how much *CGW* has been expanding these days, this incident would normally go without notice. This time, however, I noticed that the chair in question had a *Thrustmaster* flight control system bracketed onto the arm rest. By the time the chair was fully assembled and fitted with the *Thrustmaster* weapons control system, a keyboard, and, would you believe, parachute straps, the curiosity of this indefatigable propeller-head was piqued. The speedy conversion from a drab old office chair to an ACES II ejection seat would have made "Q" of James Bond fame turn green with envy.

The prototype bracket being demonstrated was made of anodized aluminum and hard plastic — quite sturdy. As a prototype, though, it was currently attached to the handrest of the chair with automotive hose clamps. Of course, this will change in the production version. Overall, the mount provided a steady platform (steadier than one's knees and less awkward than sitting high on a desk, that is) for flying air combat. Since the joystick and throttle are fixed to the bracket with velcro, any joystick — not just *Thrustmaster* equipment — will work with these brackets. It would also be possible to use the mount as either a convenient mouse platform and/or beverage holder between flights. There is also a rudder mount in the works for the *Thrustmaster* rudder pedals.



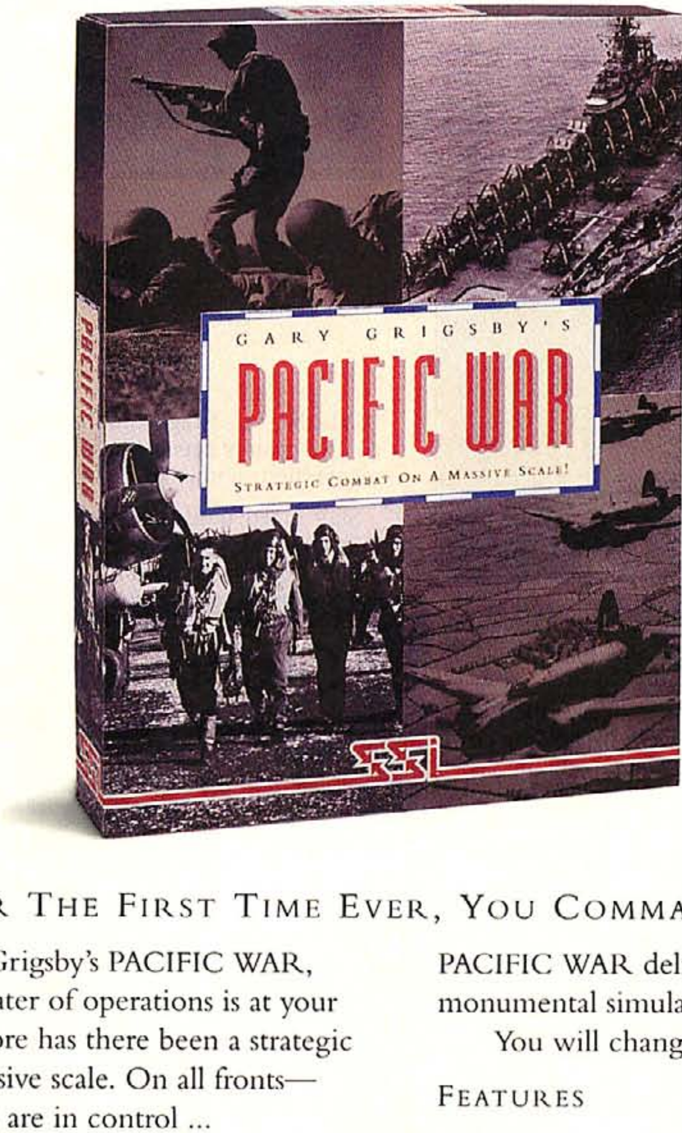
Attached to the chair and mounted directly in front of the user is a swing-out keyboard mount that positions the keyboard in one's lap. This is extremely convenient and would make a fine addition to anyone's office, as the chair mount and side bracket allow one to place both keyboard and mouse at a comfortable distance and to lean back and work in comfort.

For that extremely discriminating air combat enthusiast, **Interface Dynamics** provides a full shoulder harness and lap belt system. Sound a bit extreme? Perhaps, but it may provide a good excuse now and again ("I can't, Honny, I'm strapped in!"), and it may increase suspension of disbelief for those with lively imaginations.

Not all chairs will allow keyboard or rudder pedal brackets so the potential flying executive should write Interface Dynamics for the latest list of compatible office chairs. Prices for the brackets begin at $59.95 each or $99.95 for two, while working drawings are available for $9.95.

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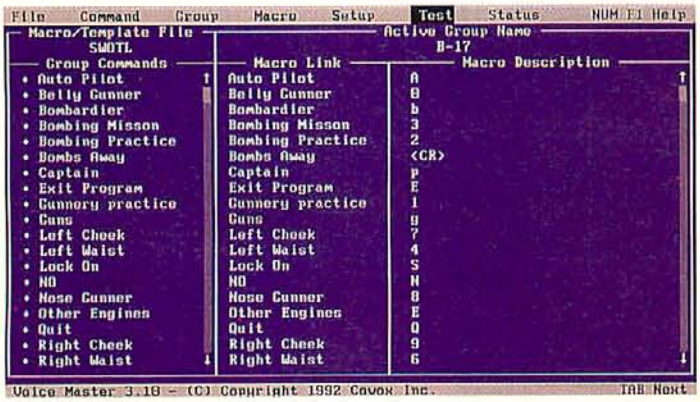
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The Covox Soundmaster II, Voice Recognition Comes of Age.

Where *Thrustmaster* modeled their flight hardware from the cockpits of modern fighter jets employing a hands-on approach, **Covox** chose to go with the hands-off route with voice recognition. Air combat simulations are becoming increasingly more complex. Almost every key is used to some extent, with different combinations for different simulations. This results in steeper learning curves when moving on to new programs.

Using the latest version of the *Soundmaster II* soundboard and the *Vmkey 3.1* voice recognition software, it is now possible to assign voice commands to every possible keystroke required in an air combat mission, from the user interface to the flight mechanics itself. More than saying "pow" into the provided microphone headset, *Vmkey* suspends disbelief by allowing one to communicate directly to the simulation. For instance, when flying the B-17 in *SWOTL*, one can give commands into the microphone to switch



to the appropriate location in the aircraft to man the various stations. "Guns" will cause the TSR program to feed a "G" character to the main program causing the guns to fire.

The heart of the **Covox** voice recognition system is the *Vmkey* software. Once loaded, it is invoked from DOS by holding down first the left and then right shift keys. Original templates may then be created and edited. Sample templates are provided including one for *F-19 Stealth Fighter*. **Covox** provided me with a *SWOTL* template, but it seems like it would be easy enough to create one from scratch. The software is well implemented and the documentation is very clear.

The *Vmkey* software, when run with the EMS option selected, will require approximately 21K of lower RAM, though this can vary depending upon how large a template one wishes to use. Once the desired template is loaded, the software is invoked with either a right shift press or the right mouse button.

Individual voice training is required prior to using the templates with a program. As the user will be flying in heated air combat, he/she may wish to include a few choice expletives in his/her template.

There are potential downsides. Since the *Vmkey* TSR software requires precious lower RAM, only a few air combat simulations will run with it. Also, the *Soundmaster II* audio card, while capable of *Soundblaster* emulation with the simulator software, still may not run the user's particular game with *Soundblaster* sound.

Before purchase, users should call or write **Covox** for *Soundmaster II* and *Vmkey* compatibility for their specific flight sims prior to purchasing the hardware. The *Vmkey* system runs for $229.95.



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Puttin It All Together

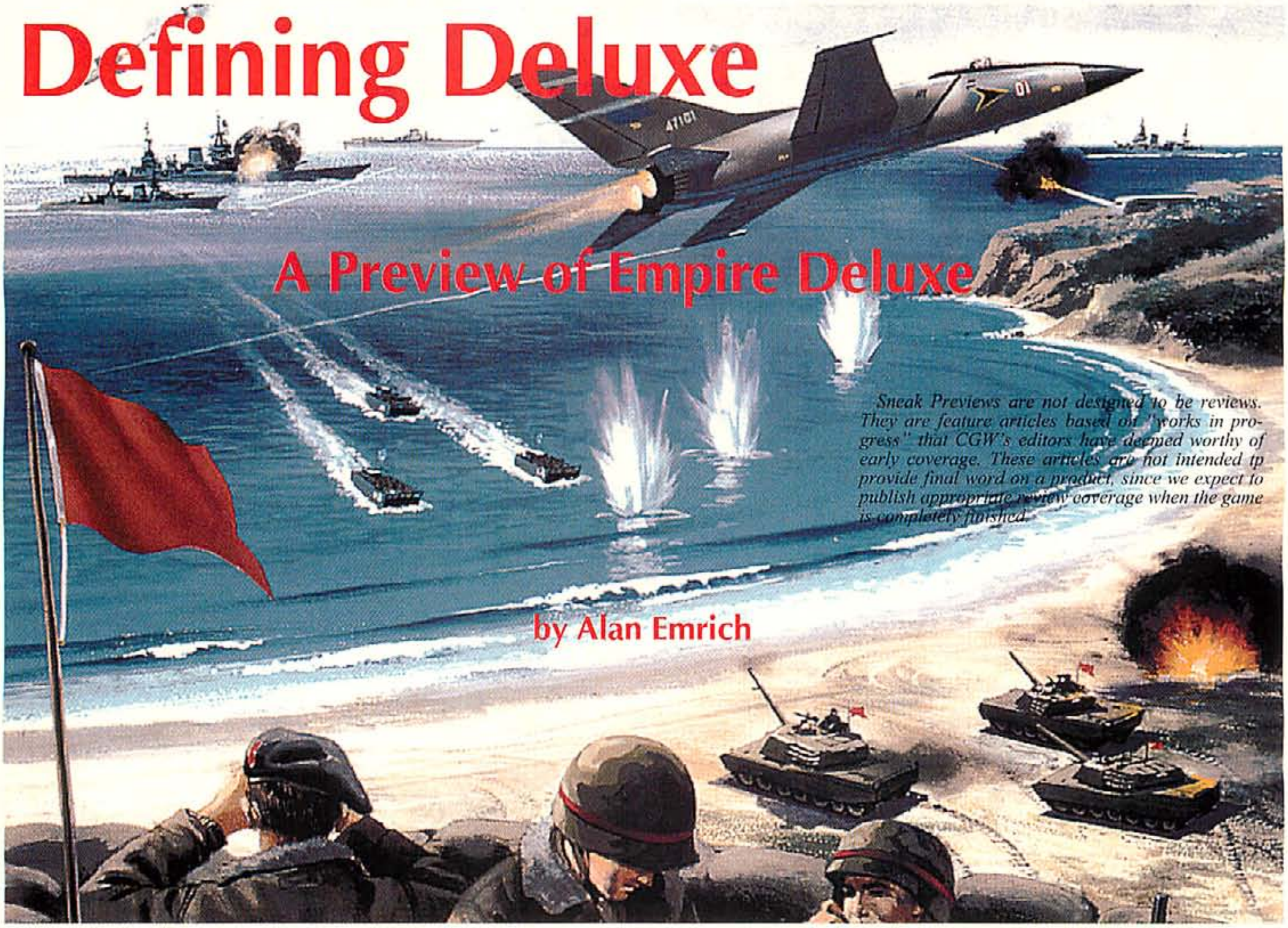
Whether one straps into the **Interface Dynamics** modified Executive chair or sets up the **Covox** *Soundmaster II* board for voice recognition, simulated flight will never quite be the same.

Stay tuned until next time fellow propellorheads: full-blown home built cockpits and Steve Edwards' HOTAS system — "Can you say user-configurable joystick buttons?" CGW

Defining Deluxe

A Preview of Empire Deluxe

by Alan Emrich



Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" that CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended tp provide final word on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is completely finished.

In the mid 1980s, I made the decision to purchase a "real" home computer. Having graduated from the Magnavox Odyssey to an Atari and on through Mattel's Intellivision to an Atari 800XL, it was time. At work, we used both an original IBM PC and an Apple IIe. Personally, I preferred the Apple. Since it was to be a "game" computer and there were more games available for the Apple IIe, I knew that was the route I would go when the time came to purchase a computer. Yet, I procrastinated. After all, that was a lot of money to plunk down for something everyone knew would be outdated in a few years.

Two events happened in quick succession which afforded my purchase. First, I had just come home from a particularly winning trip to Las Vegas (having placed second in a poker tournament), so money was no longer a concern. Second, the Apple IIGS was just released and the future looked promising for that machine. (Which shows how wrong it's possible to be, right?). Yet, for all the games I bought which quickly followed that computer's purchase, the one I really wanted wasn't available on that platform. It was **Interstel**'s *Empire*, a game that I had seen a friend play some years before.

Fortunately, I still had enough money from the trip to buy a "PC Transporter" card which, it was promised, would allow my Apple IIGS to run MS-DOS software. It worked (to the degree promised in the ads, at least), and I quickly realized the addiction which has afflicted so many for so long, an addiction to playing *Empire*.

Setting the Wayback Machine

Empire is an "ancient" (1960s) mainframe computer game that proved so solid in its basic design and playability that even today… well, I'm getting ahead of myself. Suffice it so that it survived for many, many years in the misty domain of computer mainframes. Originally designed by Walter Bright for the VAX computer (while he was attending Cal Tech), *Empire* has moved from publisher to publisher (originally distributed by **DECUS**, almost released by **Epyx** and most recently released by **Interstel**), finding minor improvements and additions along the way. With the forthcoming release of *Empire Deluxe* from **New World Computing**, the long evolution of the quintessential strategy game, *Empire*, continues.

Back to the Basics

Empire has long been regarded by computer war and strategy gamers as a "classic" and has even, rightfully, found its place in the *CGW Hall of Fame*. If there was ever a staple diet for strategy gamers, *Empire* would be served with the main course. While neither fancy with ultra-gee -whiz blinding graphics and *BLAMMO!*-sound support nor elaborate with 27 ratings-per-unit to go with the detailed logistics, production and 200+ pages of rules with units conducting battles that would require a dozen spreadsheets to understand, *Empire* is simply a "meat and potatoes", abstract wargame. Like a burger and fries, it's a diet that gamers never seem to grow tired of.

Frankly, if there were ever a computer game invented which needs no introduction, it would have to be *Empire*. Since so many people are already familiar with the core elements of that game, this preview

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will concentrate largely on the differences between **Interstel**'s *Empire* ("Wargame Of The Century") and **New World Computing**'s release of **White Wolf Productions**' *Empire Deluxe*.

Crying Wolf

For those who don't recognize the name White Wolf Productions right off the bat, it is probably because they didn't see the opening credits to **QQP**'s *The Perfect General*. As a corporation formed around Mark Baldwin (one of the co-designers of Interstel's release of *Empire*) and Bob Rakowsky (White Wolf's "modem man" and connectivity expert, among other things), their splashy debut with *The Perfect General* received quite a bit of notice in the hobby press. Having secured the rights to *Empire* from Interstel (in a deal that we'll discuss another day when someone else is buying the drinks), White Wolf reached an agreement with New World Computing for publishing and distribution, and the rest, as they say, will be history.

Deluxe Philosophy

The makers of *Empire Deluxe* want to make it emphatically clear that it is NOT *Empire II*. *Empire Deluxe* was perceived as and, judging by the beta copies received, has become a game which would maintain the "pure essence" of the classic *Empire* game, easing it gently into the world of competitive 90s software products. It is more of a facelift than a radical redesign. For those who are seeking a radical redesign of the classic *Empire* game, there are two options. Either wait for *Empire II* to be released (no, there are no "official" plans for that game — however, Mark has been accumulating player feedback comments for years and, in this day of sequels, it seems like a natural) or consider a look at QQP's forthcoming *Battles of Destiny* (which will be examined in a future article).

Three Tiers

Empire Deluxe features three levels of gameplay. The basic level offers something less than the classic *Empire* game in order to facilitate learning it. By beginning with the map completely exposed from the beginning and reducing, somewhat, the naval unit types available for production, it offers great tutorial potential.

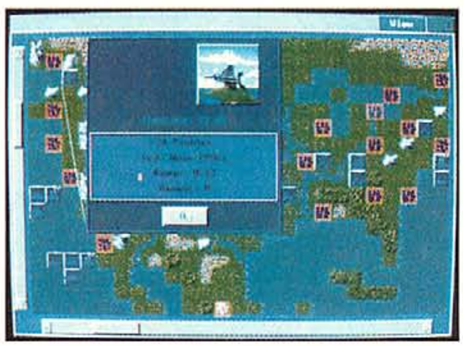
The standard game is, essentially, "good old" *Empire*. The same unit mix, the same world to explore (with the same deluge of small islands as opposed to large continents) but with all of the graphic, sound and user interface enhancements to bring it into the 90s.

Finally, the advanced game is chock full of new little goodies. The two most significant additions are the inclusion of bombers and armor units to the unit selection and adding effects to the various terrain types found on every map. Cities, too, have their production abilities tweaked around a bit (nothing dramatic, but it becomes occasionally useful to take cities



"off line" from production and damage sustained can affect the speed with which new units are produced).

Players can turn their infantry units into "air bases." A one-way conversion, it defends like a city (or an infantry unit, for that matter) and offers a landing strip for airplanes. Some programming enhancements include the ability to move *through* (but not end movement in a stack with, except, as usual, at cities) other friendly units. Also, production can be vectored so



that new units built in one city will automatically move to another. Such vectoring can even be specified for land, air or sea forces only (or in any combination). Gee, if only it included setting transports to "convoy" units automatically between ports, it would be perfect!

Connectivity Deluxe

Interstel's *Empire* was quite novel in its day for being such a popular 3-player game. Supported with a play-by-email feature almost as an afterthought (because, Mark Baldwin admitted, he couldn't support modem play in those days), *Empire* has, over the years, created a torrent of play-by-email games which, I believe, remains unsurpassed by any other disk based computer game.

In *Empire Deluxe*, more is better. The number of players is no longer limited to either two or three. Now, games can include up to six players! Each position selected for play is set before the game commences as either: on the same computer, playing via a specific comm port (for modem/serial connections), a play-by-email position or a computer player of either beginning, average or expert skill level. Alternately, a position can be just plain switched off. Note that the inclusion of computer player skill levels replaces the "sliding bars" found in the original *Empire* (whereby the speed of production and luck in combat of the various players could be adjusted).

While it is difficult to imagine a single person with five phone lines and modems connecting up with other people to play a live, 6-player modem game of *Empire Deluxe* (imagine how long one would have to wait for their turn!), the improvements in the play-by-email element will keep games full of human players viable and interesting. Modem play of *Empire Deluxe* is more likely to see direct head-to-head applications.

Messages are sent via a "chat" line along the bottom of the screen, but are not displayed until "sent" and the receiving players (everyone receives every message) click on their "mailbox" icon to read the latest gossip. Kludgy, but non-intrusive for the pure strategists who hate interruptions.

Tools of the Gods

Empire Deluxe features a complete scenario builder, too. Maps for every scenario generated (either by players or randomly by the computer) can be "defined" with pinpoint precision by players. Map height can be any number from 20 to 150 squares, width can range from 20 to 200 squares (*Empire*'s original maps were all 60 x 100). Thus, players can be fighting over a board of up to 30,000 squares in size (the same size as a large *Global Conquest* map). This compares to the original *Empire*'s 6,000 squares and *Civilization*'s 4,000. In other words, it can be either a very large or very small world, with many sizes in between. Players will also be pleased to note that and east/west map "wrap" feature may be toggled as well. Thus, only the top and bottom of the map can be made safe, edge-of-the-world boundaries.

The scenario builder is more than just a mere map maker. Naturally, it allows the user to "paint" worlds from scratch (or operation on newly created random worlds within the scenario builder) by

placing various terrain upon its squares (mountains, rough, forest and rivers constitute the new landscaping). Additionally, one can place units and cities of any of the six player's colors (and neutral cities) on the board. Furthermore, the ships can start out with specific names and the cities can have their initial production efficiency and specialties defined as well. Thus, honest-to-goodness scenarios can be created that will require an added measure of imagination. Dare I suggest that even (gasp!) *historical* scenarios could be generated? (Gee, take the six major powers from WWII, create a map of the Earth, customize unit placements for early 1942, define ship names and city specifications. Perhaps something like the photo to the right).

Those "Other" Improvements

Naturally, many technical upgrades to *Empire*'s sound and graphics (it had little of either to speak of) have been put into *Empire Deluxe*. Musical themes and a variety of sound effects for moving different unit types and production, battle sound effects and so forth will keeps one's sound card occupied. Visually, the map can be zoomed to a variety of different levels (and, depending how well one can squint, played at even the largest magnification).



A plethora of pixel possibilities is also included. Screen resolution can be formed to exactly fit one's monitor and, at the higher resolutions (even VESA SVGA is supported), the graphics look dramatically better.

The interface will look instantly familiar to *Perfect General* players. Some further refinements have been added, though, all of which are fairly intuitive. Naturally, the charts, tables and histories that players have come to know and love are still on call. Perhaps the most useful new feature is the 'X' key, which toggles an "Auto Explore" function. While made for fighter units and destroyers during the early stages of a campaign, it can come in handy in other circumstances as well. I've found that it has sped up my play (and enjoyment of the game) immeasurably.

New Empires To Conquer

Although there are more nuances to describe, space is short. Allow me to leave a mystery as to the capabilities and proper employment for the new bomber and armor units. After all, there must be *something* left in the box to be discovered!

Suffice it to say that most owners of *Empire* have gotten a lot of replay value from their beloved, beat up copy of the game. It's time to trade in the old classic for the newer model, gang. She's still as sleek as ever, with nicer lines and more chrome for those who like *Empire* in the fast lane. The engine has been tuned and she purrs better than ever. Strategy gamers will definitely want to give this reborn classic a serious test drive. CGW

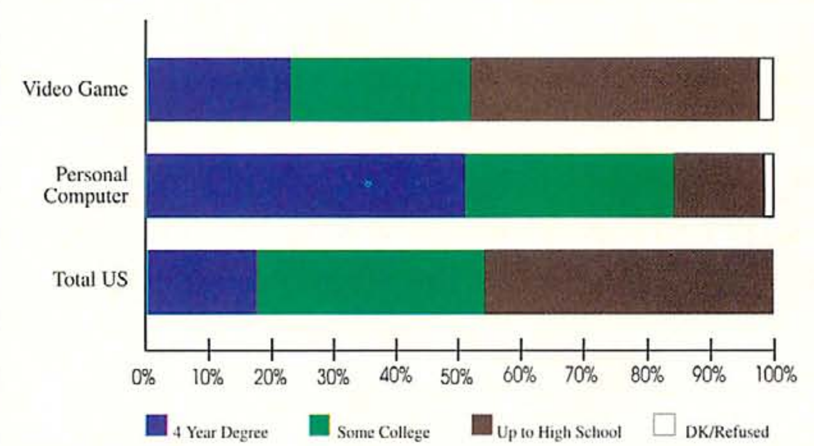
(Continued from Page 62)
going to do a lot of good if those consumers don't have computers. Further, we think that potential: stereo buyers read stereo magazines, car buyers read automobile magazines, model railroaders read model railroad magazines and baseball card collectors read baseball card magazines. Why would an ideal software publisher ignore the magazines read by the opinion leaders in a hobby? Mass media coverage is, in general, a positive factor, but there are several industry executives who are saying, "Let's ignore the computer press, they're going to be there for us. Let's focus on the consumer press."

As we noted in our last SPA coverage, the mass market and the cutting edge "early adopter/opinion leader" market are two different animals. The latter provides the core business for this industry and games that move toward the former provide new income and future growth. One cannot obtain the former by ignoring the latter, however.

Reaching A Broader Market

There was, however, some remarkably good news about the expanding entertainment software market presented at the SPA conference. Total sales of entertainment software reached $376 million, a 6% increase over the previous year. That seems a hefty increase in a flat or declining economy. Of that amount, MS-DOS programs accounted for 82% with Macintosh providing 8% and Amiga providing 5%.

Further, CGW readers can be expressly pleased because two of their favorite categories are the leaders in disk-based sales. Simulation games (including wargames) account for 40% of disk-based sales and Adventure/Role-Playing games account for 14% of domestic sales and 29% of international sales.



Education Attainment
Source: SPA Consumer Market Study

The percentage of computer-using households that use entertainment software is increasing at a fast pace. This year, recreation and entertainment became the second most common use for home computers (See Chart 1). Further, the SPA's research showed clearly that households which used personal computers had a higher educational level than households which simply had a video game machine or the overall U.S. family demographics (See Chart 2).

Licensing in Hot Properties

By far the most interesting session was the one provided by Dick Lehrberg, vice-president of **Interplay Productions**. Lehrberg brought together a panel consisting of Neal Newman from **Paramount Pictures**, Rand Marlis from **CLC** (the licensing agency used by 20th Century Fox, Orion and Nelson pictures) and Murray Froikin of **New Frontier Entertainment** (a licensing agency for literary properties). Licensing is going to be a fascinating field over the next four years, since the new technologies that are currently under development are well-suited to exploit properties which already exist.

Said properties, of course, include: films, television series, cartoon characters, books, cars, magazines, celebrities, comic books, organizations, unions, songs, venues, networks and musical groups. The advantages of licensing existing properties are tremendous with regard to providing instant positioning for a new product and providing promotional crossovers. As Marlis defined the process, "A license is a short-cut that saves marketing/advertising dollars while guaranteeing product quality and exclusivity."

The disadvantages for the computer entertainment field lie in the long lead times necessary to develop products and the expensive percentages that licensors are currently charging. Indeed, Paramount's Newman observed that the use of existing properties will require licensees to deal with four guilds in addition to the studios (Screen Actors, Screen Writers, Directors and the American Federation of Musicians). He suggested that there will be a period of greed in which the four guilds and studios demand so many points that it will become impractical for software companies to license existing properties. He expressed hope, however, that the current negotiations with regard to multimedia would allow contracts to be changed so that permission to re-use likenesses, songs, footage, etc. would not be handled in the same way as it is currently negotiated. The current situation can truly be a nightmare.

For those who are interested, the current deals (which usually do not include actors' likenesses and musical score run 6 to 10% of the gross sales with the licensee paying a guaranteed sum up front — 25% on signing, 25% on approval of game design, 25% at Beta and the final 25% on shipping). Different contracts are of different lengths and there is no set book value on a given property. Contracts may start at a low of approximately $25,000 to a high in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Each deal has to stand on its own, but the studios are in the licensing business to make a profit and they want to make sure that the licensee is going to market the property in the best possible way. As Paramount's Newman says, "I certainly don't back the *Enterprise* out of the garage for anyone who comes in."

Back to the Holy Grail

Perhaps, the most encouraging words to be heard in the business of the Software Publishers Association were in the special interest groups and committees of the organization. The word "standards" was becoming quite prevalent and that bodes well for the consumer. Standards in labeling, package sizes, UPC codes, sound card protocols and installation programs are all being discussed and worked on. If such effort bears fruit, the publishers who make up the association just might have a better chance at reaching that mass market they long for. That, incidentally, means it should become easier (and maybe less expensive) for *CGW* readers to find what they want on the store shelves.

When it comes to the holy grail of the mass market, though, our stand is where it has always been. The market will expand as the products get better, the platforms become more stable and more people get excited about the software. Until then, the quest for the mass market is a chasing after wind. CGW

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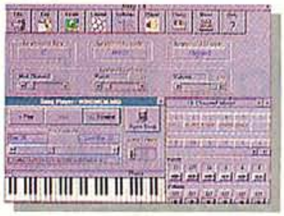
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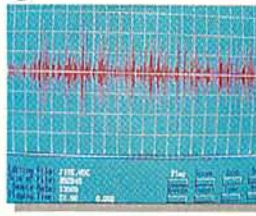
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On War(lords)



How to Successfully Take on Seven Enhanced Warlords with only Wit, Luck and Normal Production.

by Jim Lowerre

The story of this treatise begins in the land of Illuria when the last Arch Mage, Peace Enforcer, lay on his death bed. Not four days away by Khorfian Griffin, a Leader of one of the eight empires sought ancient knowledge in the Great Library. A copy of what the Leader found is below. The original is enshrined in the Royal Illurian Palace at Ilnyr, the seat of government for the entire land.

On War In Illuria

In the beginning, before the coming of the Arch Mages, there were many wars in Illuria. All of these wars occurred in three natural phases. These phases were:

Phase One, Expansion — the race to capture neutral cities.

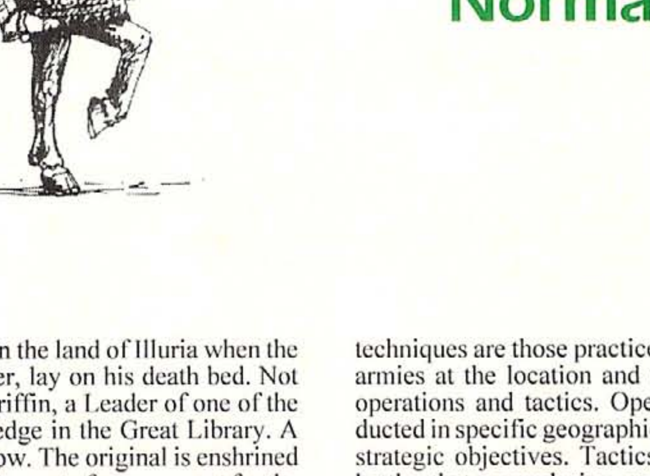
Phase Two, Limited War — the defense of empire and preparation for Total War.

Phase Three, Total War — the deliberate and calculated elimination of opposing empires.

So shall wars always be in Illuria. Here, then, is advice for each phase (addressing strategy, production techniques, operations and tactics). Strategy is the overall plan to accomplish the phase objective. It includes military, political and fiscal considerations relative to the other seven empires of Illuria. Production techniques are those practices used to provide the required type of armies at the location and time needed to successfully conduct operations and tactics. Operations are military campaigns conducted in specific geographically defined "theaters" to accomplish strategic objectives. Tactics are the techniques used to win the battles that occur during operations.

Phase One - Expansion

STRATEGY — Capture and hold as many neutral cities as possible. Don't make enemies doing it. Buy only heroes and only the most necessary towers.



PRODUCTION — Produce armies using these priorities: shortest production time, fastest movement, and greatest strength, in that order. In the immortal words of I. V. Lenin, "Quantity has a quality all its own."

OPERATIONS: PLANNING

Offense — Decide which "theater(s)" to capture first. Theaters are geographic areas defined by natural boundaries such as rivers, mountain ranges and deep forests.

Plan which cities to capture first. Use the following criteria: proximity to friendly forces/cities, defensibility after capture, distance from other empire forces/cities, army

production capacity, income and defense. Plan for two armies to capture each neutral city. Plan to capture a city near the closest temple.

Decide the starting Hero's initial priorities; explore ruins (which and when)? assist armies to capture cities? capture cities alone?

Defense — Study the terrain and the other empire's starting locations. Identify choke points (i.e. bridges and mountain passes) that must be held to prevent penetrations of the fledgling empire. Know the vulnerable wide open spaces on disputed borders and the crucial cities located there.

Know the army strengths and weaknesses of the first empire(s) you will come into conflict with (likely enemies). Determine around which city(s) contact will be made. Where is the terrain your armies are most effective on/in? your opponents least effective on/in?



OPERATIONS: EXECUTION

Offense — Beat the other empires to as many neutral cities as possible. Don't attack other empire's cities (Kill their armies but don't antagonize anybody, yet). Capture a city near a temple. Get as many armies as possible blessed by the temple.

Defense — Occupy positions in choke points and vulnerable directions before capturing the neutral cities behind them.

Watch the other empires expand. Watch the other empire's hero(s) as they go into ruins. Know which ones found magic items (they survived and didn't find a magic ally). If they got eaten, did a magic item survive? Can you retrieve it?

TACTICS

Offense — Send two ordinary armies to take each neutral city and attack one army at a time, weakest first. If a special army or hero is used to attack a neutral city pair it with an ordinary army. Use every movement point to get armies to unconquered neutral cities.

Defense — Use powerful magic allies to defend choke points rather than nearby cities (the intent is to seal the emerging empire). Seal off single square choke points (i.e. the Huinedor side of the bridge to Ilnyr) with cheap and powerful units and garrisoned towers.

Don't garrison cities until they are threatened (when an enemy's army is one turn away). Hold cities with the same number of armies that are attacking. If a city is lost, immediately counter attack. Don't let city defenses drop below level two. Note: In all phases, unoccupied cities always eventually attract the other empire's armies.

Heroes — Gain magic allies (early in Phase 1 magic allies are much more valuable than magic items). Go to ruins near friendly cities in the direction of expansion. "Escort" with as many armies as possible. Wait a turn if it will increase the escort by at least two.

Figuring The Odds — Know what the chances of success are before attacking or accepting engagement (if given the choice). For one on one engagements use the following chart:

Odds of Winning With A Given Relative Strength

Relative Strength	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Odds of Winning	3%	6%	10%	17%	26%	37%	50%	63%	74%	83%	90%	94%	97%

(i.e. a 5 has the same odds of beating a 3, as a 9 does a 7 (+2=74%))

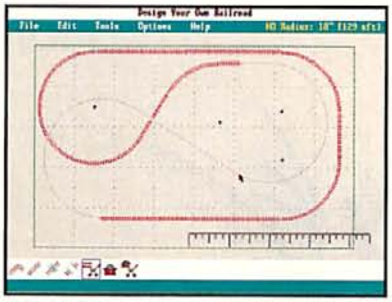
For multi-army engagements use the formula or guess!

Phase Two: Limited War

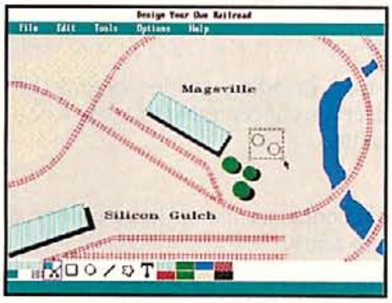
STRATEGY — Strengthen geographic position, military forces and the treasury. Don't make

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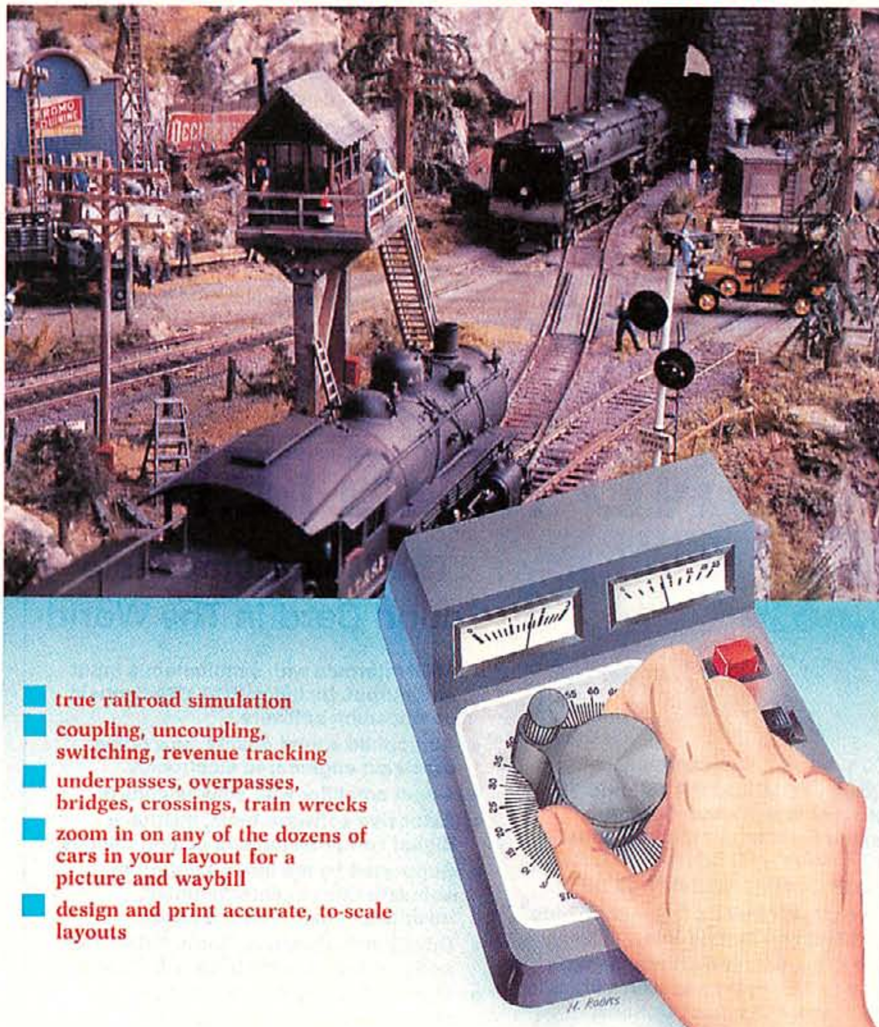
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enemies unnecessarily. Determine which enemy empire is to be destroyed first.

PRODUCTION — Produce flying armies with at least one city (the objective is one flying army per hero and non-dragon magic army).

Vector quickly produced armies to garrison non-threatened cities. Vector medium to high strength armies near a temple for blessings. Don't vector to a threatened city (another empire army(s) is/are one turn away) that may be lost (two turns of vectored production go right out the window with the captured city). Switch instead to garrisons behind the threatened frontier.

Start at least one navy.

OPERATIONS: PLANNING

Offense — Determine which (if any) other empire cities threaten the defense of the new empire. Anticipate making an enemy if the city(s) must be captured (like von Clauswitz always says, "War is an extension of politics by other means"). Determine the most likely empire to be the first Phase Three victim. Based on this, plan where to mass armies and heroes for Phase Three. Plan to use new temples in Phase Three.

Defense — Pick a central location in each controlled theater to position theater reserves in (hopefully but not necessarily near a good road net. If two theaters are geographically small, one reserve on the common border may suffice for both). Plan on theater reserves being three or more, highly mobile (i.e. sorcerers, cavalry, wolf riders) medium or high strength armies. Plan to reinforce threatened areas with the theater reserves (see Phase Two TACTICS below).

Count on having the frontiers attacked and interior penetrated.

OPERATIONS: EXECUTION —

Offense— Capture other cities critical to the defense of the new empire. Seek out unexplored ruins.

Defense — Don't get upset when attacked, penetrated and one or two cities are lost, it's only temporary.

Let the other empires attack one another at every opportunity.

Extend choke point defenses into the other empires.



Use reserves to destroy invading armies before they attack friendly cities. Keep reserves concentrated. Create a new reserve as soon as one is committed.

TACTICS —

Offense — Conduct reconnaissance on large enemy stacks by attacking with one cheap army.

"Max Stacks" — (a stack of eight units with a bonus adjusted strength of eight or nine). Use a hero with bonus of four or five, a flying army and six weak armies, *or* a magic army, a flying army and six medium to high strength armies.

Ambush enemy heroes to capture magic items (use a hero and non-hero max stack to be safe, attack first with a non-hero then the hero max stack, and pick up the left over magic items (clean them off, unless you like'em sticky)).

Attack other empire cities and stacks of eight armies with max stacks.

Defense — Use both fixed and mobile defense. Use max stacks for mobile defense.

At choke points: (1) on the enemy's side, deploy light infantry armies, one army per square, two armies in width, in the direction of the other empire's approach to the choke point. (2) build towers at the narrowest point on the other empire's side and man them with medium strength armies (+2 defensive strength). (3) place medium strength armies, one army per square, behind the towers and running back through the choke point itself to the nearest friendly city (Defense in depth attrites and delays the opponent. He pays 2 MP for each road square fought into. AI opponents are confused when their stacks are completely surrounded with light infantry).

Frontier cities in vulnerable wide open directions can use the same deployment.

In wide open vulnerable directions: (1) put a majority of available forward strength in tactical reserves between cities (2) move tactical

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reserves into a city(s) when threatened (another empire army(s) is/are one turn away) (3) reinforce with theater reserves (4) if the enemy's armies determine that the city is now too strong and try to by-pass it to invade your interior, counter attack from the rear once he's in the open, OR get around him into the next threatened city (fortunately the invaders rarely look back) (5) continue to build strength as more reserves arrive. Try to destroy invading armies in the stronger frontier area before they get into the weaker interior.



Sorcerers, cavalry and wolf riders make good theater reserves. Heroes can augment theater reserves by moving (hopefully flying) from crisis to crisis. Navies transporting slow medium to high strength armies on rivers can be theater reserves.

Defense Against Deep Penetrations (usually an all flying stack) — Use a "matador" technique. Deliberately evacuate a city just a little more than one turn away from the invader's nose. Pick the least valuable city (one producing weak armies or that just completed production, hopefully surrounded by rough terrain that gives your armies an advantage over the penetrators). When the enemy takes the bait, mass your reserves and destroy him (preferably before losing the city and on advantageous terrain). If the city is lost, try to counter attack in the next three turns (enemy vectored armies start arriving on his third turn after capturing the city).

General Defense — Garrison all cities with at least two to three medium strength armies. Strengthen city defenses to a rating of seven if and when necessary (i.e. don't waste money). Do this for a numerically weak garrison before the city is attacked. If towers are an option they're always cheaper.



If a city can't be held, don't try. Evacuate to a nonadjacent position and wait. Watch when the enemy takes the city to see what armies he has. Gather reserves. If necessary, wait until some of the enemy moves out to take another city and recapture the lost metropolis behind him. Then mass against the marauder out in the open and cut him down like the dog he is.

When weak in a frontier city and threatened by stacks from two other empires, retreat and let the two of them fight it out. After they have attrited one another move back in and retake the city.

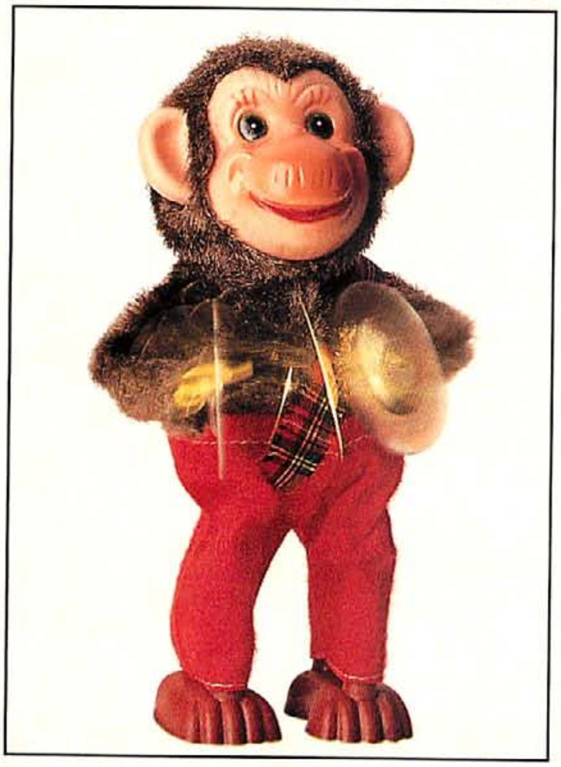
Don't block access from one empire into another.

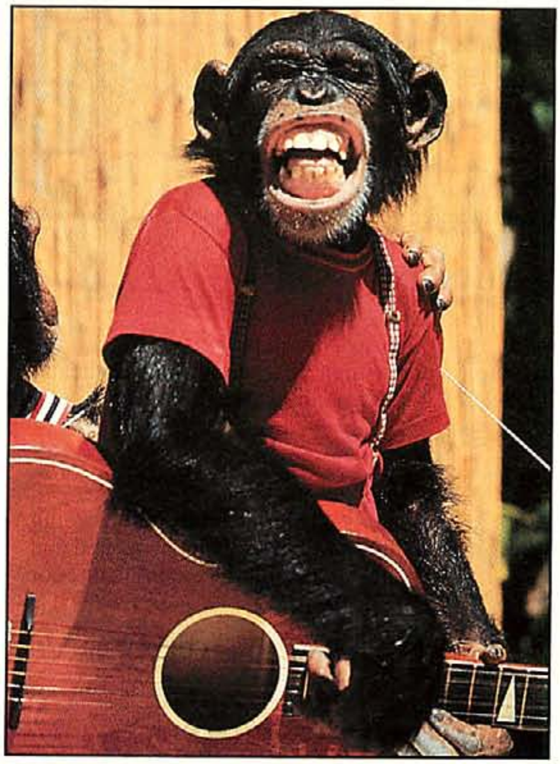
Use navies and the units they transport to attack flying armies at sea and vice versa.

STACKS

Maximize Bonus Points — Evenly distribute magic items and allies between heroes. Have only one of each special army type per stack (i.e. only one hero, one flying army, one magic army per stack). Don't create stacks with army strengths greater than nine.

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Keep all but the special armies in a stack of the same type, strength and movement.

Fighting Order — Infantry, cavalry, flying armies, magic armies and heroes fight in that order. Giants and heavy infantry fight before light infantry.

Phase Three: Total War

STRATEGY — Make enemies one at a time, then eliminate them.

PRODUCTION — Vector "max stack" replacement and garrison armies into the captured interior cities in the target empire. Continue to vector to threatened friendly frontier cities. Disband unwanted Phase Two armies.

OPERATIONS: PLANNING

Offense — Plan to eliminate the weakest of the adjacent empires first. Plan to eliminate next the weakest empire contesting your control of a theater (reduces the forces needed to hold secured areas).

Defense — See Phase Two above.

OPERATIONS: EXECUTION

Offense — Capture all the enemy's interior cities before going after his frontier (the internal cities are not as well garrisoned and are vectoring production to the frontier). Gut the enemy's interior as quickly as possible.

Attack enemy interior cities with a max stack. Have a stack of replacements nearby to make up losses.



Don't lose any magical items. Keep attacking hero max stacks within several turns of each other. Rescue dropped magic items.

Defense — See Phase Two above.

TACTICS —

Offense — Don't leave penetrating max stacks adjacent to an enemy frontier city on the way in (they may be attacked).

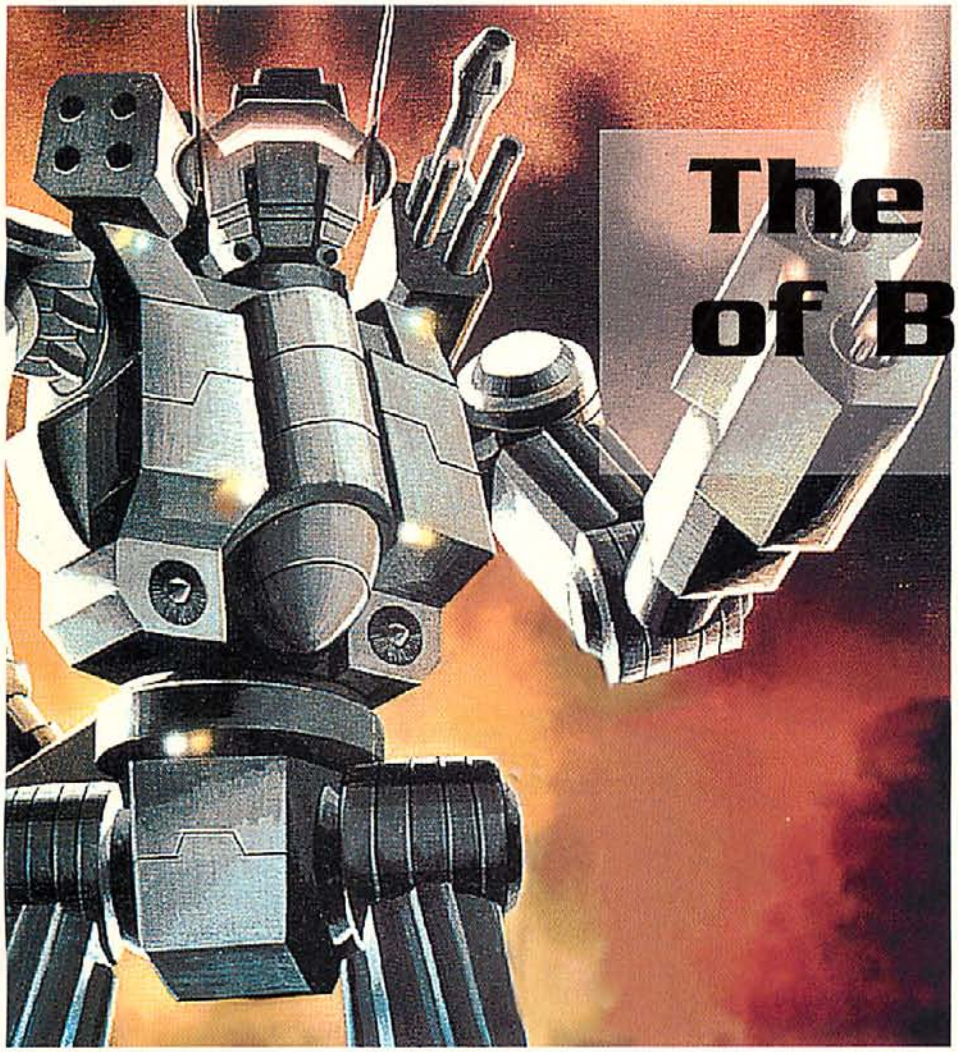
"Tough Nuts" (enemy cities defended by multiple possible max stacks) — Attrite the enemy with non-hero max stacks until the hero max stack is assured of victory. Pick up any left over magical items

Defense — see Phase 2 ABOVE.

Fundamental Truths

Fate is fickle.
Might makes right.
Run away to fight again another day.
It costs two MP to pass through another unit in a bridge square.
Everyone hopes that SSG creates two or three more worlds such as Illuria.


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The Robots of Brawn

Mechanized conquest in SSI's *Cyber Empires*

by Chris A. Lombardi

TITLE:	Cyber Empires
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
PLAYERS:	1-5
GRAPHICS:	VGA
SOUND:	AdLib, SoundBlaster/Pro, Roland
PRICE:	$49.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS:	Silicon Knights (Denis Dyack, Rick Goertz)
PUBLISHER:	SSI Sunnyvale, CA

My first exposure to hulking, mechanized defenders of good was in the lazy after-school hours of obscure broadcast TV. Between the Godzilla hour and The Little Rascals came a cheesy piece of Japanese television called Giant Robot. Giant Robot was a tinny, cylindrical being identical to the Dorothy's Tin-man in every respect except that he was several orders larger and he was armed to the teeth. From his eyes shot a glowing red laser and from his fingertips came cigar-shaped missiles that were the immediate end to any foe, be it a flying saucer, an overgrown reptile or a looming Tokyo skyscraper. What made this particularly marvelous to a grammar school kid was that this enormous hunk of firepower was at the command of a 10 year-old Asian boy who ordered Giant Robot around via his dual-purpose watch/robot command center. In **Strategic Simulation's** *Cyber Empires*, the eternal child in this reviewer found the means of expression to a 15 year-latent fantasy — he can now command legions of Giant Robots and not glance even once at his digital watch.

Cyber Empires is both a tactical and strategic game of global conquest set in a dark, future-fantasy world of tribal-technological warfare (based on the European boardgame, *Steel Empires*). One to five human or computer players command an army of behemoth warriors as they "slag it out" for control of an island continent divided into 72 territories.

The game's basic dynamic is very simple. Each player begins with one country upon which he builds a factory. At the player's command, any one of nine different cyborg warriors rumbles forth from this factory to conquer new territory, establish government control, and extort money to build more factories, create more cyborgs, conquer new territories…

Inevitably, these wandering conquerors will bump their titanium noggins with other wandering conquerors, and things will have to be settled on the battlefield. This involves a very intense action sequence where the player grabs his joystick and takes full, real-time control of one cyborg. Battles can take place on five terrains (volcanic, forested, arctic, desert, urban) each with interesting advantages and disadvantages for each different type of cyborg. For example an Achilles unit can use its lightning speed along with forested terrain to its advantage, using the cover to avoid fire while working into position. On the other hand, the Crossbow unit with its long-range missiles, can be rendered ineffective by the dense foliage. One cannot, then, count on joystick skills alone. Thought must be put into which cyborgs are fighting on which landscape.

In addition, there are other tactical matters to be considered before combat begins. If, on the defensive, the player has the option to place his cyborgs on a tactical map and can choose which cyborg he will control (though control can be switched in



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combat with the F10 key). On the offensive, the player must choose the primary objectives for the cyborgs he will control. Will this be a hit and run mission? An attack on enemy structures? Or on the enemy capital? The player must specify and must select the degree to which the cyborgs will stick to the plan. At the lowest "commitment" setting, the cyborgs may change their objective in mid-battle; at the highest setting, they'll play by the book. I don't really understand the need for this "commitment" setting, and I've never really noticed it ever effecting anything. If anything at all, it merely increases the player's perceived level of control.



Thus, success requires both a skilled joystick and the strategic savvy to put the right cyborg in the right battle on the right terrain using the right tactics.

For those gamers who consider the joystick an ignoble device unsuitable for a PC, *Cyber Empires* can be played from the strategic level only. Such non-action gamers should be warned, however, that this game is probably not for them. Though the strategy game is simple and engaging, the heart of *Cyber Empires* is the action element and those who would opt not to enjoy this aspect will probably be treated better by "dedicated" strategy games designed for this sort of gamer.

With that said (and the audience thinned a bit), we can get to the specifics of game play. *Cyber Empires* offers a number of pre-game options that can significantly shape the style of the game. After selecting the general wealth of the continent (affecting the amount of revenue each province creates), the number of computer opponents and their intelligence level, the player is randomly placed on the map. If the player has selected the "Show All" option, then he will see the opposing empires and all their movings about. If he selected "Fog of War," such things will be cloaked from view.

Often, one's initial placement can be decisive in itself. If the player has the good fortune of finding oceans to his rear, he is in good stead; whereas if he finds himself in the center of the continent, he may only be around to see the tenth round of play.

After placing one's initial factory, the player begins throwing cyborgs to the four winds, capturing as many provinces as possible. Eventually, expanding empires will bump into one another and lines will begin to form, with fortifications being built on the fronts. Fortifications give a strong advantage to a defender in the tactical battles, as they provide sturdy walls and come decked-out with long range missile launchers and other weapons. From this point, the game becomes a slow, seesawing, battle-by-battle struggle. The smart player will usually fortify against one opponent while making a strong offensive against another until he develops a large enough revenue base to build more factories and more cyborgs, and thereby generate enough steam to mow the rest of the opponents down.

It can be a *long* game — anywhere from 15 to 25 hours for a complete campaign. So one had better come into this one with a strong interest in the mechanoid mythos and a yen for action-style gaming.

In addition to the campaign game and the bare-bones strategic game, *Cyber Empires* also has an action sub-game where



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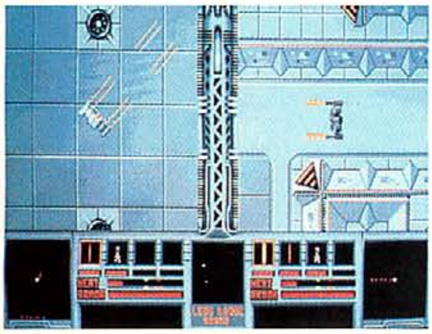
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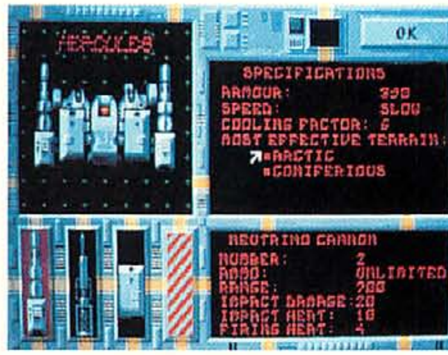
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cyborg commanders can hone their skills before they step into a campaign. The player can choose to either engage a particular type of cyborg one-on-one, or take-on increasing numbers of enemy cyborgs in a game of "survival." It is in this action sub-game that one comes to find a weakness of the game, that is, the computer controlled cyborgs.

The AI cyborgs have two states of action; either they sit back and pummel their opponent with long range weapons, if they are so equipped, or they race recklessly toward their opponent without any considerations for terrain, positioning, or their current condition. Often, in forested terrain, the clever human intelligence need only to sit back and wait while the computer cyborg's blast their way through the trees and in so doing, overheat their hulks



and freeze in their tracks. Easy pickings. In open terrain, the human will quickly develop a simple "side-step and fire" matador maneuver for the computer's bullish tactics that will easily cut the AI's armor in half before they finally bump head-long into the player. The AI is not the quickest wit. Fortunately, what it loses in smarts to the human it usually gains in numbers. Besides, in the campaign game, the player can only control one of his (up to 10) cyborgs in any one battle. Thus, one's own units act as recklessly as the enemy's while the human-controlled cyborg runs around playing a small, though certainly advantageous role, in each battle.



The computer AI does much better at the strategic level. When placed at the higher intelligence settings (there are 6) it puts up a good, aggressive fight, even if it does tend to leave its interior weakly defended — a fault not limited to the computer alone. If one can punch through the computer's front line, he can wreak delicious havoc on the innards of its empire.

Of course, one can avoid the computer AI altogether by rounding up one to five humans. Unfortunately, *Cyber Empires* has no modem capability, so players must "hot seat" a multi-player game.

Cyber Empires is a solid game. It has nothing to really rave about and nothing that hobbles it. It's graphics are simply adequate and the sounds can be taken or left. The interface is, again, adequate, though there is the occasional irritant. On a matter of gaming taste, I felt that the campaign game could get a little drawn out. I prefer a more dynamic game to a slow war of attrition. Finally, as mentioned, gamers looking for an exclusively strategic game had best steer clear. Gamers who have a penchant for joystick-jamming and are fans of the BattleTech, RoboTech and Giant Robot universes, however, will find much to like in the setting and mechanics of *Cyber Empire*'s cyborg warfare. CGW

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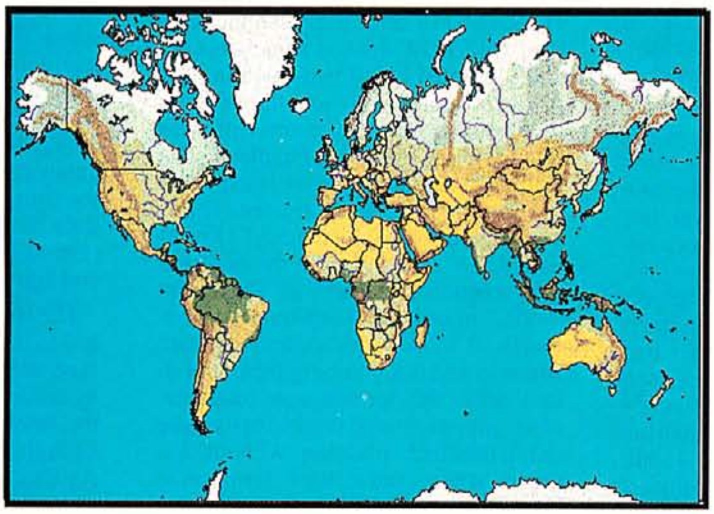
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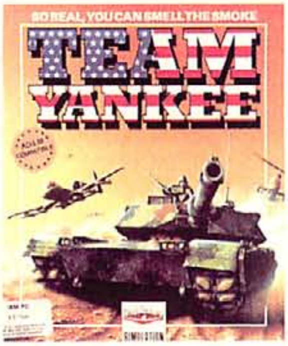
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by Richard Savage



TITLE:	Team Yankee & Pacific Islands
SYSTEMS:	IBM, Atari ST, and Amiga
PRICE:	$59.95 & $49.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-Up
DESIGNERS:	Steven Green and Richard T. Horrocks
PUBLISHER:	Empire Software Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada

Team Yankee

Having read the book, *Team Yankee*, a few years ago, and also having served as tank crewman in the Army, I was looking forward to reviewing *Team Yankee* and its follow-up, *Pacific Islands*. Both games are easily played using just the mouse, although the keyboard or a joystick can also be used, if preferred.

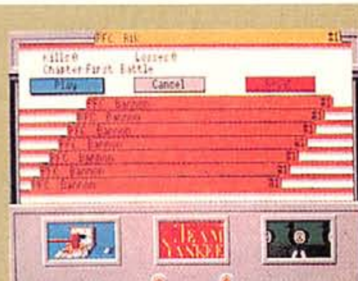
Naturally, anyone who wants to become very proficient will begin with the training scenario. In this case, the scenario is familiar to anyone who has ever played a tank simulation, a circular course based on a modern tank range and filled with different targets to shoot up. Since *Team Yankee* starts with a "parade" of vehicles that one expects to meet later in the game, each passing temptingly in front of one's unit, many gamers are likely to have the same embarassing experience I did. Figuring it was just a training range, I innocently trained my sights on one of the vehicles rumbling in front of my tank. My trigger finger itchy, I clicked my left mouse button, just to see what would happen. What the heck, right? *Wrong!* I received a message a millisecond later saying, "You JERK, you just destroyed a friendly vehicle!" Well, excuuuuse me! How was I supposed to know I was entered in a Gomer Pyle act-alike contest?

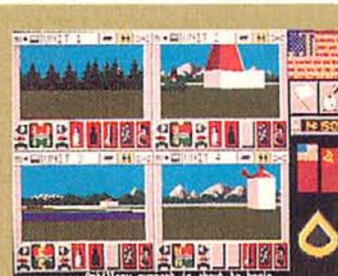
My run-in with the authorities completed, I waltzed smoothly through the training course. Basically, the player controls four platoons. Unit one consists of two M-1 Abrams tanks, and two ITVs. (M-113 armored personnel carriers with TOW missile launchers specially adapted.) Unit two has four M-1 Abrams, along with unit three. Unit four rounds out the group with two M-113's, and two M-2 Bradleys. The challenge is that the player is expected to control all four units at once. That's 16 vehicles simultaneously! Fortunately, the screen can be divided into four sections, known as "quadrant mode," in order to keep track of one-fourth of those vehicles and one can zoom in and out, jumping from unit to unit with the icon\mouse interface. Most gamers should be able to oversee the battlefield situation without *too* much strain, once they familiarize themselves with the interface.

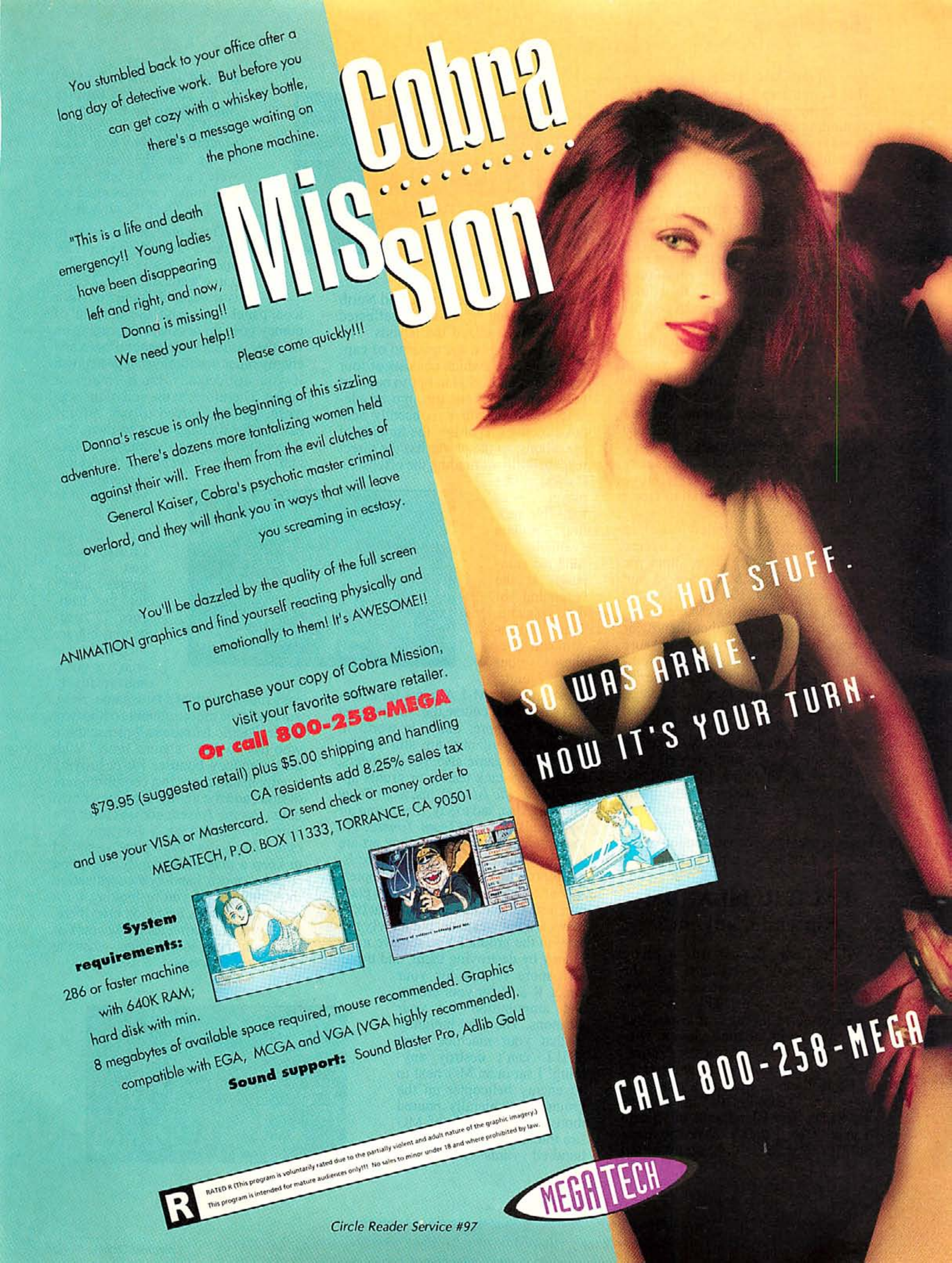
Once one has completed the training stint, it is time to get into the game proper. This main portion of the game consists of eight scenarios in each of five difficulty levels. In order to advance, players must complete all eight as a PFC, before starting the second round (as a Corporal) and advancing through the ranks up to Captain. The bad news is that one must win at a scenario, no matter how many times the result has been a frustrating defeat, until one can move on to the next one. Worse yet, there are no provisions for saving a scenario once one has gotten into it. So, if the player commander is just about to capture that crucial hill, and a distraction from outside the game world (family, phone, friends or fiends) comes up, it is necessary to pause the game and hope that one can get back to the computer in a reasonable amount of time. Otherwise, it is necessary to return to the beginning of that scenario and start from scratch.

The first scenario in the game requires one to defend a wooded hill. Basically, the Soviets were shredded by accurate weapons fire, if I remember the book correctly. It seemed simple enough, but proved deceptively tough. As I sat placidly in my tanks, blazing away at every Russky in sight, I was receiving disturbing messages on the bottom of my screen. "Unit 2 has just lost a vehicle," "Unit 3 has just lost a vehicle." What was I doing wrong? A short time later, the computer ended the scenario, telling me I had suffered a mortifying defeat. After a debriefing by







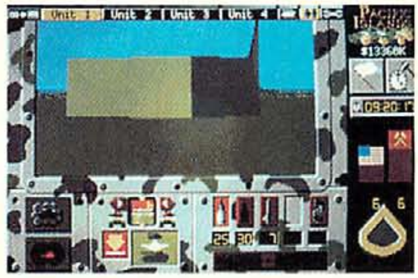

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R
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the computer, which basically told me what a goon I was, I went back to the same scenario, and looked harder at the positioning of my units, and what the objectives were. Instead of dispersing my units into nearby tree lines, I had basically sat there in a big group! The second time around, travel orders were immediately posted to all my units (one simply clicks onto the maps at the desired positions and adjusts their speed). A short time later, all units were in position and, courtesy of thermal imaging, and laser range finders, the battlefield had become full of Soviet combat vehicles so torched that even Monkey Island's Stan the salesman couldn't sell them as "Previously Owned Tanks."

The second scenario involves an attack on two objectives, Log and Link. I played this one several times before I finally won it, mainly due to the victory conditions. The first objective, a large group of woods, has to be completely free of the enemy before you can move onto the second. The frustration factor of not being able to save a game in the middle of a scenario started to kick in while playing this. I also discovered several disappointing facts about the game. First, those M2 Bradleys and M113s are empty. Either that, or the soldiers won't come out! There are no infantry in this game, either friendly or enemy. Which brings up a second sore subject: machine guns. There is nothing in the game they will kill, or cripple! In other words, they are useless. No wonder they are the only weapon with unlimited ammunition! I finally won the second scenario, and pushed on to the third, another defensive manuever. At this time, I realized that I had basically "mastered" the game system, and rather than waste more time, I would move onto *Pacific Islands* to see if the second version of the game had made any improvements.

PACIFIC ISLANDS: Nintendo, anyone?

While *Team Yankee* was a pretty straightforward re-creation of the book, the designers were on their own making up this sequel. This appears to be unfortunate, because it seems like they spent a lot of time playing Nintendo while hashing over the "script" of *Pacific Islands*. The player starts off as Capt. Bannon again, but this time, you direct "Team Pacific" in recapturing the Pacific Island atoll of "Yama Yama." (No, I didn't make the name up!) It seems the atoll has a lot of top



secret electronics gear on it, and North Koreans, along with some disaffected Soviets, have seized the islands. The player is assigned the mission of capturing the atoll, which consists of four separate islands. So far, not so bad, but now, here comes the trip into arcadeland.The Pentagon has recently sent out directives regarding the funding of operations, so the player has the direct responsibility of funding the offensive. Basically, the player has fifty-five million dollars available to fund his campaign at the beginning of the game. This means you can purchase your own units, substituting an M-1 Abrams for a useless M-113. Of course,the Abrams cost quite a bit more, but it is worth it, because the infantry are still nonexistent in this game also. No engineers, Dragon anti-tank teams, or grunts appear in *Pacific Islands*, just as in *Team Yankee*. Also, sad to say, there is no air power, also like in *Team Yankee*. All those attack aircraft on the box art are just for show! Even though *Pacific Islands* promises Hughes 500 helicopters and SA9 Gaskins, once you start playing, it soon becomes apparent that both items are not weapons, but merely targets on the ground! You receive more money by destroying them, and therefore more repairs for your tanks, R & R for your crews, and ammunition for your weapons. The final indignity is that your machine guns STILL can't destroy anything! I sat in an M-1 next to an enemy helicopter on the ground, and literally poured thousands of rounds of MG fire into a helicopter sitting a hundred yards away, and nothing happened. I called up the gentlemen at **Empire Simulations** in Canada, to see if it was a fluke in the program,and they explained to me that the helicopters were "armored," and therefore impervious to machine gun fire. Oh, OK, uh huh.



The icons are the same in *Pacific Islands*, except for one that really shows this game's arcadish roots. There is a stack of dollars on your icon panel now, and the amount of money goes up or down, depending on whether you shoot up enough tanks and enemy radar installations. It goes down if you accidentally hit a church or house. Therefore, at the end of the scenario, you are forced to pay off any natives for damage done to them, before you can buy new ammo, or replace and repair your vehicles. Definitely something you'd see in an arcade game.

In closing, I'd like to say that these games aren't for the hardcore wargamer, but are for people who enjoy a quick and relatively easy run-through of a tank game. *Team Yankee* is the more authentic of the two, while *Pacific Islands* will please those who like to play "against time." With all the money bonuses for destroying enemy installations in a certain amount of time, and the ability to buy your own units, *Pacific Islands* comes closer to a Nintendo game than a wargame. *Pacific Islands* is a "fun" game, designed to keep a player constantly busy, and requires more hand-eye coordination than strategy. If you're looking for a serious wargame, best look elsewhere, but if you're looking for a few hours of fun, then these may be just what the doctor ordered. **CGW**



Opponents Wanted

Those wishing to place their own free ads can send us a postcard (or use the *Notes* section of the RID card), letter, FAX [714-283-3444] or E-Mail (Prodigy [EXPT40B], CompuServe [76703,622], GEnie and America On-Line [CGW]). Generally, we run them only once, so send another after each publication if you want to keep your name listed! The ads themselves should serve as reasonable examples as to how to write your own. However,

- Include a brief description of the types of opponents and games you are interested in playing. Games being played other than by modem *can* be listed (trading save game disks or even face-to-face).
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- Include your city and state so that people who call you will both: a) have a clue as to what time zone you are in, and b) recognize it when they see it on their phone bill.

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Networks

The Sierra Network from Sierra On-Line brings people together "just for the fun of it," for a flat fee of $12.95 per month for 30 hours of evening and weekend access. Players gather to meet and play (or watch others play and just kibbitz) real-time games of twenty different on-line, multi-player games including: *Red Baron, Bridge, Chess, Poker, MiniGolf* and their new real time FRP *The Shadow of Yserbius*. Using an interface anyone could learn with *no* instruction whatsoever and featuring the quality gamers have come to expect from Sierra, this network is worth exploring. For more information, call (800) SIERRA-1.

Attention Canadians! The **SUZY** information system has added a comprehensive play-by-mail section to their network. With Craig Russell in charge of this new section, players can play PBM games, download special software to facilitate PBM play and exchange information with other PBM gamers. For further information contact Saraka Chobot (VP of Marketing) at W-(604) 439-1311.

Join the **Summit Games Network**, the first network to feature multi-tasking. This unique element allows a member to perform *four* functions at once *plus* upload and download files simultaneously through a menu driven interface. This is an entire network dedicated to *games only*! Role-playing, adventure and wargames for commercial, shareware and public-domain releases are featured. Direct games support from such companies as: TSR, Inc., Origin and Lucasfilm Games. For more information, call W-(800) 955-9957 or M-(915) 672-2810 (7, even, 1 stop bit). IBM or compatibles only (with a Hayes-compatible modem).

CompuServe is the first international information system to offer three unique services specifically for modem gamers:

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If you are not currently a CompuServe subscriber, you can join by calling (800) 848-8199 and mentioning that you are interested in Modem Gaming.

Bulletin Board Systems

Thunderbolt! BBS in Chicago, IL now offers online entertainment with *Poker, Blackjack, Bingo, Galactic Empire, Zorgon, Quest for Magic, The Arena* and *Flash Games* ("The Next Generation" of online gaming). Play RPGs with online multi-sided dice! Eric Spanitz, SYSOP. Modem settings 8-N-1, 300/1200/2400. Phone (312) 248-4822.

Opponents wanted for *XSHIP*, a space conquest strategy game. The game is played via BBS with two to ten players per game. Game turns update as fast as the players take their turns. For more information, call the **Battlefield BBS** in North Babylon, NY at (516) 669-0522 300/1200/2400 8-N-1.

Call the Missile Silo BBS. Contestants wanted for *Command HQ, F-29 Retaliator* and many others. Tournaments to be held soon. Files, message base and (soon to come) on-line games. Bunning on Telegard 2.5 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Located in Skokie, IL outside of Chicago. Call (708) 581-1735. Mention this ad in *CGW* for no-hassle access validation.

HARPOON USERS UNITE! The ***Harpoon Users' Group*** (HUG) invites you to join the ranks of its members. HUG publishes the quarterly newsletter C3I which features articles on design tips, game strategy and tactics, weapons platform information, ***Harpoon*** product development and much more. HUG also operates the ***Harpoon*** Scenario Warehouse BBS where members have access to hundreds of user-created ***Harpoon*** scenarios. Our BBS can be reached at (718) 746-7466. Information on joining HUG is available on the BBS or by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to our new address at: HUG, PO Box 5138, Bryan, TX 77805-5138.

The Delphic Oracle is an all-gaming BBS. Play RPGs (***AD&D, GURPS***), play-by-email games (***Diplomacy, ASL***), ***Empires at War*** (a Naploeonic on-line game) and other games on-line. Find modem game players. Gamemasters and players wanted. Simi Valley, California (805) 582-9004 [2400 8-N-1] Free access.

The Imperium BBS is looking for modem gamers like you! Tournaments are run for ***Knights of the Sky, Command HQ, The Perfect General*** and ***Global Conquest*** (just to name a few!). We have online games, message base and 3 gigs of files, too. Call one of our three nodes in Middleton, NJ at either: 1200/2400 (908) 706-0342; 9600 v.32 (908) 706-0305; HST Dual Standard 38.4 (908) 706-0321.

The World of Windows is looking for some great game players like you! Try your skills and compete for monthly prizes. Sports: Drag racing excitement at ***The Motor City Raceway***, a fishing tournament at ***The Freshwater Fishery***, play in the ***Tournament Golf*** game or even pick your favorite NFL team and play some ***Pro-Bowl Football***. In *RPGs* there are the post-apocalyptic horrors in ***The Land of Devastation***, warriors collide in ***The Pit***, explore ***SinBaud's Dungeon*** or conquer the galaxy during ***Trade Wars 2002***. For Strategy games, try our ***ChessMagic*** chess tournament, deluxe versions of ***Scrabble*** and ***Blackjack*** or solve a murder at the ***Who-Dun-It Hotel***. Modem settings are 8-N-1, 300-38400! There is free access and thousands of Windows games to download for off-line enjoyment. Call today at (305) 751-3117.

Mindcraft Software, Inc., publisher of the ***Magic Candle*** series, ***Rules of Engagement, Seige*** and ***Breach 2*** is proud to announce that it now has a BBS running 24-hours a day. The BBS offers on-line help, upgrades, demos, scenarios, technical support and more. Set your modem to 2400, 8-N-1 and call (310) 320-5196.

The *Electronic Estates BBS* in Oak Lawn, IL invites you to join their ***Tradewar 2002*** game. Fly your spaceship, battle the ferrengi and other traders. Download TWRULES.ZIP before starting. Once you start, you may not restart for 4 months. Only 150 players maximum per game. Call (708) 424-6136.

Space Station Aragon welcomes all adventure gamers to call (206) 277-5489 in Bellevue, WA. This unique board features free downloads of the latest demos from many major software companies and text files on subjects like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*. Take part in our forums to discuss and get hints on the latest games. Take a break and play one of our adventure doors. Sysops Hibard and Tiern.

Conventions

The Computer Game Developers Conference is where the insiders meet to discuss the technical aspects of creating computer games. For more information, call or write: Dev Con, 5339 Prospect Road, Suite #289, San Jose, CA 95129; (408) 374-4340.

The **Gen Con Game Fair** will be held August 19-22, 1993 at the MECCA Center in Milwaukee, Wisconson. For more information, write to Gen Con Game Fair, PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

Origins '93 will be held July 1-4, 1993 at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth, Texas. For more information, write or call: Gemco, PO Box 609, Randallstown, MD 21133; (410) 298-3135.

By Area Code

Teams being accepted for a *Playmaker Football* league using AI coaches. For guidelines or rules write to: David Darnell, RTE 1, Box 143, Clarkton, MO 63837. Also willing to swap teams if not interested in league play.

Ace fighter jock looking for Tally Ho! on bandits for modem play with *Falcon 3.01*. Will duel or ally with ace pilots. Up to 14.4V BPS modem support. Call Hank "Batman" at H (201) 728-8245, evenings. "Yo, your fries are done!"

Seeking worthy and bloodthirsty teammates for GEnie's multi-player *Battletech*. I'm willing to answer any questions that I know about the game or questions about signing on to GEnie. Call Dave in Tallmadge, OH at H (216) 633-2362 between 6pm and 12am Eastern Time. If I'm not in, leave a message. I can also be reached on GEnie (of course) at: D.HUANG2.

Lock and load! I'm looking for *Perfect General* opponents in the local area. Call Joe Rundell in Aurora, CO at H (303) 680-6583.

Seeking a play-by-mail opponent for *Empire* or a modem play opponent for *The Perfect General* in the Orlando area. Call Khris at H (407) 339-8264.

Seeking "live ones" for *Second Front, Western Front* (either play-by-mail or face-to-face) or for most board wargames. Please contact Joe Silva in Pleasanton, CA at H (510) 846-2903 or W (510) 423-1472.

Looking for fellow sim enthusiasts in the San Francisco Bay/Tri-Valley area. I enjoy *Falcon 3.0, Aces of the Pacific, M1 Tank, Command HQ* and *Powermonger*. I also play strategic boardgames (i.e., *Risk!* and *Shogun*). Cannot do long distance. Contact Chris in Pleasanton, CA at H (510) 846-7857.

Local modem opponents wanted for *The Perfect General, Global Conquest, Modem Wars, Theatre of War* or face-to-face *Lost Admiral, Second* or *Western Front, Warlords, Battles of Napoleon* and *Red Lightning*. Call Ben Tobin in Mesa, AZ at H (602) 969-5816.

Tucson gamer seeks local opponents for any Amiga wargame. Modem, PBM or FTF. Call Bob in Tucson, AZ at H (602) 883-4825.

Local modem opponents in the southern NH area wanted to play *The Perfect General, Falcon 3.01, Modem Wars* and am willing to try new sims. Call Sam at H (603) 437-3417 after 2pm. I can be reached on America Online as: "Pardus."

Seeking local opponents in the Chicago area for modem play of *Command HQ* and *Global Conquest*. Call Joe Seidel at H (708) 782-6267.

Lieutenant General "Shifty" Pierre challenges you to battle in *The Perfect General*. The battle: *Stuck in the Middle Again*. Leave message on *Electronic Estates BBS*, Oak Lawn Illinois (see above) at (708) 424-6136.

Cygnus 4 Technologies of San Anselmo is proud to announce the pre-release program for the Warlord Role-playing System software (WRS). The pre-release program provides GMs the opportunity to evaluate and make suggestions on the WRS software. The WRS graphic interface assists GMs conducting fantasy adventures by providing a quick means to retrieve spell, weather, PC and NPC information without interrupting game flow, and features modules for combat, environment, and campaigns. The WRS runs on a IBM PC/AT or compatible system with EGA/VGA display adapters under DOS 3.2 or higher. Interested GMs should write, Cygnus 4 Technologies, PO Box 834, Belmont, CA 94002 or call (800) 932-2409 for an application. Qualified applicants will receive a discount for the WRS software upgrade and other special benefits.

Seeking opponents for *The Perfect General, Global Conquest* and others. Call Randy in San Gabriel, CA at H (818) 337-1131 from 4-6pm Pacific time.

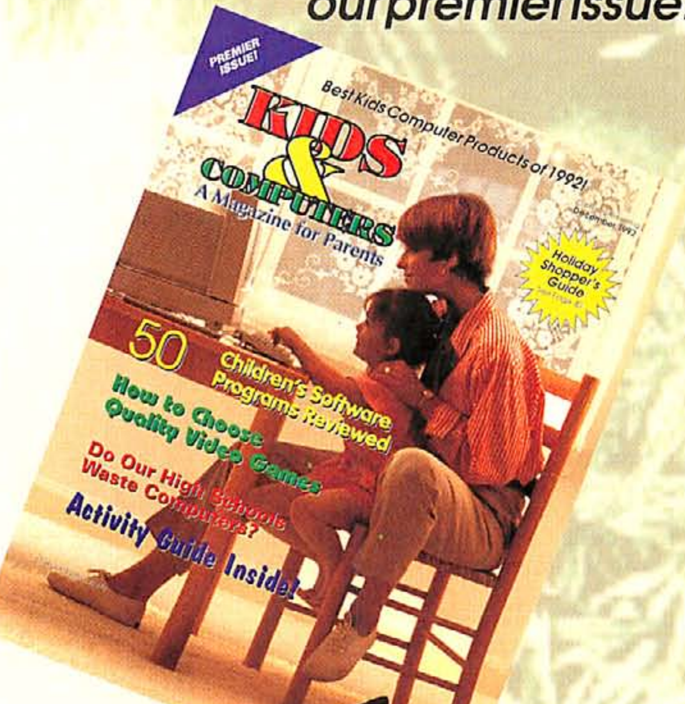
Seeking local opponents for *Falcon 3.0* in the Sacramento, CA area. Call Alex at H (916) 967-6076. **CGW**

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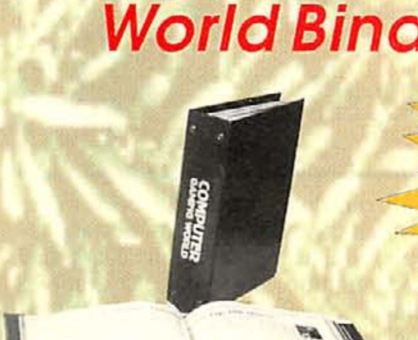




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Mid-East Air Conflict in Air Force Commander

by Michael Peck

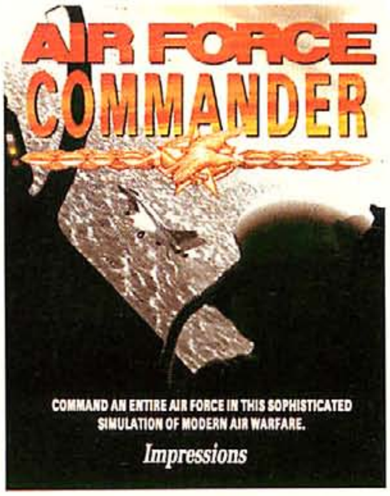
TITLE:	Air Force Commander
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED ON:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNERS:	Chris Bamford, Simon Bradbury, David Lester
PUBLISHER:	Impressions Software Farmington, CT

One has to hope that the scenarios in **Impressions'** *Air Force Commander* will remain hypothetical. Still, the game offers a rare perspective in that it allows players to command an overall theater strategy that includes targeting priorities, logistics and a myriad of other factors. After all, it doesn't matter how many Migs a Falcon pilot shoots down if his country's airfields and factories are being blown out from under him and that's why the strategic viewpoint (and resultant accountability) of *Air Force Commander* is so refreshing. Rather than controlling individual dogfights, the player manages a general air campaign in which he must determine his strategic objectives and how best to achieve them with limited resources. Arcade and flight simulator buffs, beware; there are virtually no combat graphics in this game, no bombs to drop, or cannon to shoot.

Mix-and-Match Air Forces

Instead players step into the shoes of the air force commander of one of several Middle Eastern countries. The 28 scenarios range from a mini-war between the pygmy states of Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, to a full-scale conflict between a U.S.-Israeli alliance and a strong Arab coalition. The inclusion of the small Persian Gulf states adds a particularly colorful touch, as the Qatari Air Force launches a motley fleet of French Jaguar fighters, Soviet Tu-22 bombers and U.S. Huey helicopters (the spare part situation would be a game in itself).

Though the air forces may be high-tech, they are also fragile; the number of planes available is small and, more importantly, the combatants have limited supplies of fuel and ammunition.



A state concedes defeat when its public opinion crumbles — from strikes on food and power sources — or when its air force runs out of supplies and can no longer fly. The result is short but fierce conflicts as each side tries to knock out its opponent's economic and military infrastructure.

Players can scroll about the map in three modes, varying from a high-altitude strategic view of the region to a close-up satellite view. Most of the game, however, will occur on the radar map, a reasonable facsimile of the type of map to be expected in a real-life war room. Colored dots of various hues denote different ground installations, including airfields, radar stations and oil refineries. Vertical bars indicate the position and altitude of enemy and friendly aircraft. Not surprisingly, visibility on the radar map depends on the quality of radar coverage; if the Syrians lose their radar stations, the Mediterranean will disappear in a sea of green electronic haze. Surprisingly, however, there are no provisions for electronic jamming warfare or aircraft.

Players launch aircraft by clicking the mouse pointer on an aircraft icon, or on a particular airfield, and then, cycling through a list of air squadrons and support units. Planes are rated for various types of ground strikes, as well as air combat and maximum altitude. Missions include attacks on enemy ground units and installations, as well as defensive patrol and strike escort. There are also cruise missile and Surface-to-Air Missile batteries, as well as mobile radar stations to plug surveillance gaps.

Every Bomb Counts

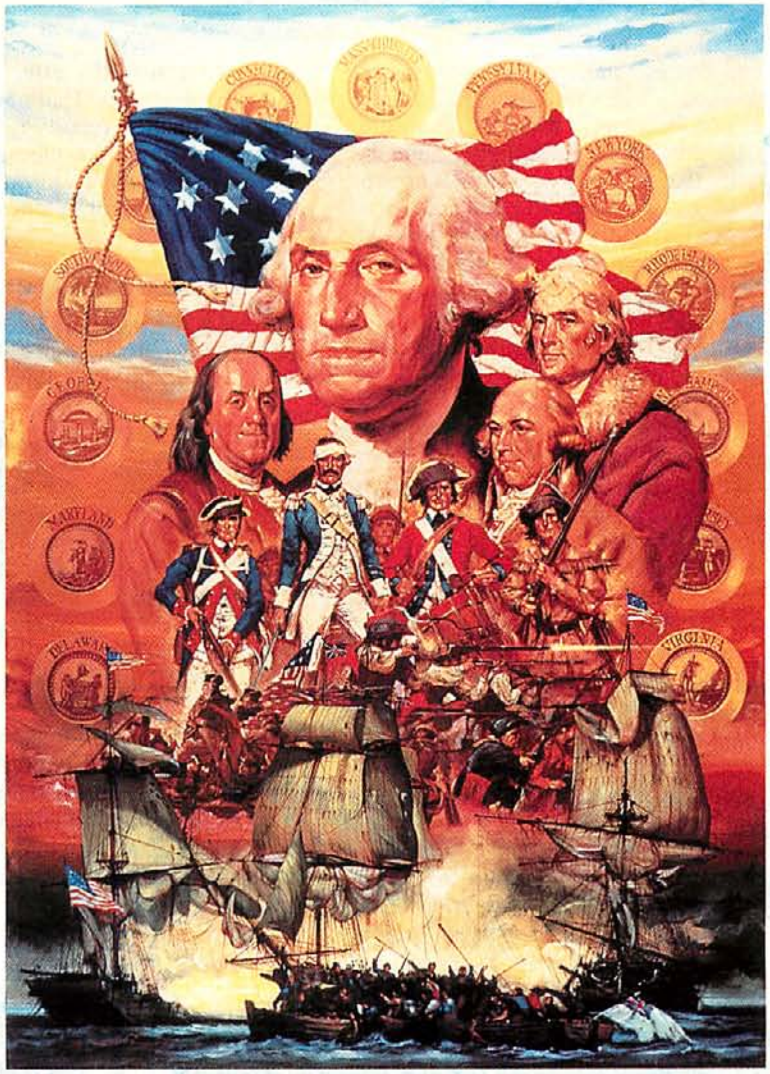
It is important to remember that when a squadron is given an order, it only launches one plane at a time. Thus, even small squadrons of two to six planes have staying power. Once launched, though, squadrons will continue the same mission indefinitely until *ordered* to stop. In the process, they



will run down their efficiency rating (which can be restored by rest and repair) and, just as important, eat up fuel and munitions stockpiles. Put simply, a player who flies every aircraft around the clock will lose the game.

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- *640 K*
- *EGA Color*



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*Pre-Release Version Screenshots

- *Mouse Support*
- *Ad-Lib Sound*
- *1-2 Players*

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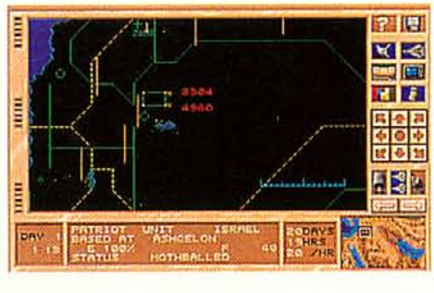
Circle Reader Service #83

and radar stations, consumes resources, players must keep a constant eye on the supply consumption update, which lists hourly expenditures and the point that a player will run out of supplies. Installations can be shut down to conserve supplies, though closing the power plant may provoke civil unrest.

The display also includes a status report (complete with the face of a news commentator) of friendly and enemy attacks and air losses. A key indicator is the political poll chart which monitors the public opinion on both sides. Public opinion is controlled by the state of a country's food and power supplies.

Given the short duration of the scenarios, players must quickly decide whether to concentrate on an opponent's air force through strikes on airfields and fuel and ammunition dumps or on civilian morale by destroying food and power supplies. As the game progresses, care must be taken to rest tired squadrons, stop all unnecessary supply consumption and assess the effectiveness of friendly air strikes. That's why checking the situation reports is so crucial. There are few quiet moments in *Air Force Commander*; a player is always doing something or having something done to him.





Electronic Overload

Indeed, the real-time workload may be the most frustrating aspect of the game. Doing all those functions while enemy bombers are streaking in at supersonic speed is a daunting task. Players busy launching their own strikes may not have time to launch interceptors or order tired squadrons to rest at the appropriate moments. The overload can also cause a player to attack haphazardly with whatever is available, rather than rotating squadrons as part of consistent strikes on precise targets. It's worthwhile to pause the game occasionally and consider strategy for a minute or two.

The user interface contributes to the problem. Though generally adequate, it still requires players to find their planes by clicking on the right airfield or cycling through a squadron-by-squadron list; a single display listing the efficiency and missions of all aircraft would be welcome. And, as is too often the case, the documentation is lacking in many places; for example, there are many anti-aircraft units, yet their effectiveness and capabilities are not listed.

Despite these problems, *Air Force Commander* is a simple yet relatively thoughtful treatment of a vital but overlooked topic. Dogfight lovers may not like it, but players who are interested not just in the how, but also in the why, of air warfare will certainly be in their element. **CGW**



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Computer Gaming World
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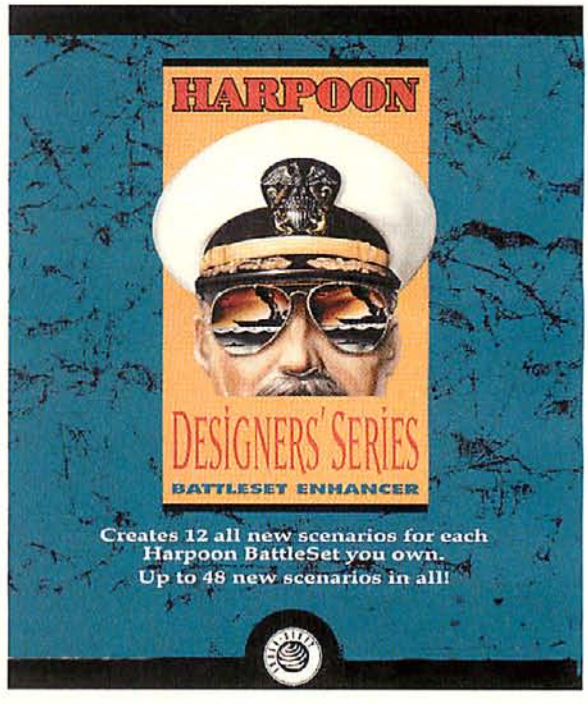
More Toys for the Boys

Harpoon Version 1.3 and Designers' Series Scenarios

by Tim Carter

TITLE:	Harpoon Designer's Series Battleset Enhancer
SYSTEMS:	IBM, Mac (B&W, Color)
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Harpoon Design Team
PUBLISHER:	360 Pacific Campbell, CA

Designer scenarios and an upgrade to your existing Harpoon game are included in one package. The upgrade aims to remove memory problems and improve the game AI.



The flag officer bowed his head in what seemed like either prayer or resignation. He had been sure enough of the last contact to launch aircraft, but the Soviet sub had vanished and the ASW units were approaching bingo fuel. He would have grabbed the earphones from the sonar operator himself if he had thought it would have done any good. He steeled himself to order the aircraft to return, anxiously hoping that the sub had been forced to flee rather than finding a place to lie in wait for the fleet and the lives it represented.

One of the best ways to vicariously experience modern naval conflict from the command perspective is to play **Three-Sixty Pacific**'s *Harpoon*. With the series continually expanding and improving, the game is almost more of a lifestyle than a game. The latest release, the *Harpoon Designers' Series* is actually two packages in one: it includes both new sets of scenarios and an upgrade to *Harpoon* version 1.3. Both of these additions can be installed automatically onto a hard drive.

Tinkering with the Electronics

With *Harpoon* version 1.3 **Three-Sixty** has put forward its last major modification of the *Harpoon* system before the release of *Harpoon II*. The version aims to remove any remaining memory problems as well as to modify some elements of game play.

Both the AAW and ASW elements of *Harpoon* have undergone revisions. In terms of air combat, the goal of these modifications is to make the artificial intelligence more effective and to make air operations as a whole more realistic. Aircraft may now jettison drop-tanks and other ordinance in order to better deal with interceptors. According to the documentation, the computer will automatically instruct aircraft to jettison when facing heavy SAM or interceptor threats. In fact, the computer does not exactly accomplish this automatically, but it happens often enough to become a consideration when creating operational plans. Air raids can now be defeated without shooting down all enemy aircraft. This is useful if one is running out of interceptors and has to make tough decisions about allocating attacks. It is also dangerous, however, as some attacks will proceed right to the bitter end, despite determined opposition.

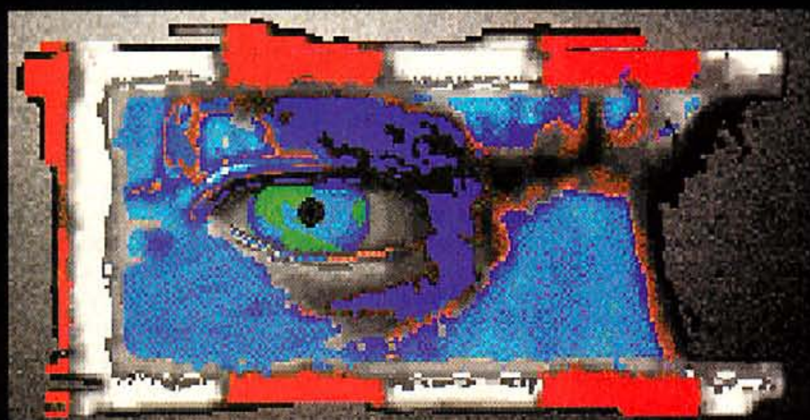
On the whole, aircraft now operate in a more realistic fashion. Search aircraft automatically move to higher altitudes and attack missions are carried out more efficiently. Interceptors need to switch on targeting radar to use radar guided missiles, giving a greater importance to "fire and forget" weapons such as the AMRAAM. The computer now tends to allocate smaller numbers of aircraft to many missions, leading to attrition combat rather than huge all-or-nothing raids. Again this varies depending on the situation.

Overall, I experienced more losses and less operational success against computer aircraft than in past experiences with *Harpoon*. Despite these improvements, however, the computer is still weak in its use of air assets. Players will have to hope that the major reworking of the *Harpoon* system in *Harpoon II* addresses this problem.

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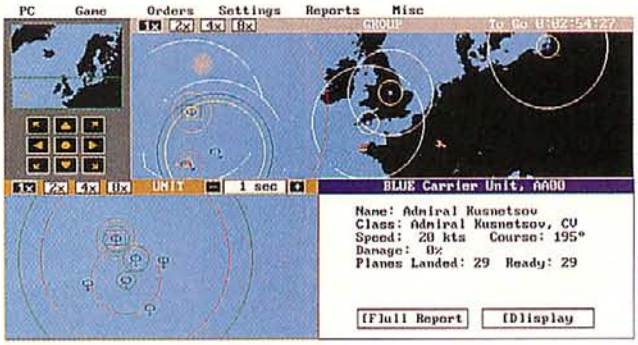




Circle Reader Service #66

Underwater, things have changed as well. The SONAR model has been upgraded to depend less on range and more on the characteristics of the platform itself. The speed of the platform now affects both the probability of being detected as well as the probability of detecting threats. Torpedoes have also been modified. Using more accurate targeting and attack models, torpedo warfare is no longer the sure thing it used to be.

The net result of these modifications is to make ASW warfare more realistic, but also more difficult for the player. Micro-management can yield high returns, particularly for submarine commanders with the patience to maneuver their boats in close (relatively) at low speed. However, in larger scenarios, where such control is not possible, ASW operations can become slightly frustrating (although this may reflect a personal preference).



Missile warfare at all levels has been improved. Bearing-only attacks are now possible and actually act as an attack against unlocated targets would. Additionally, missiles can only be used against the types of targets they were originally intended for. No more sinking an enemy task force with anti-radar missiles and Tomahawks intended for land targets, and no more taking out an enemy airfield with Harpoons.

Adding New Components: The Designer Scenarios

The meat of the package is the *Designers' Series* scenarios. When the battleset enhancer is installed it identifies the battlesets already located in the *Harpoon* directory and loads an additional series of scenarios for each battleset. Users must have a battleset installed in order to use the scenarios in the *Designers' Series*.

There are many new units available across all battlesets. Some of these units, such as the French and CIS CVs, were available in battleset four and have now been incorporated into the earlier battlesets. Others, such as the F-22, the MV-22 Osprey and the Super Tomcat are entirely new. Complete sets of platforms for countries such as Sweden, Canada, Germany and Yugoslavia are now available. All of this provides scenario builders with an unprecedented range of options.

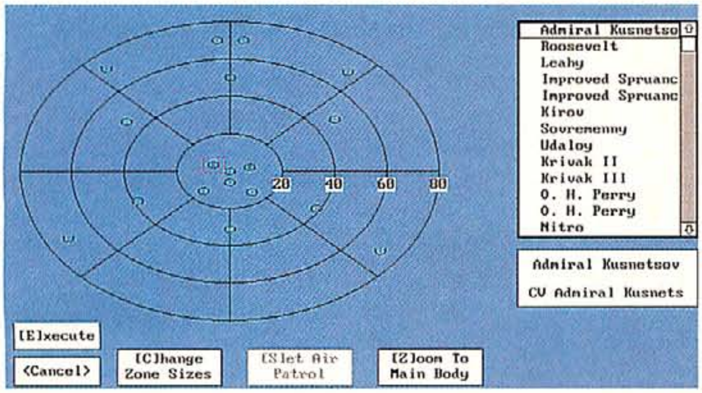
The designers have taken advantage of these options to provide players with 48 (12 per battleset) new and highly diverse scenarios. Most scenarios tend to be pretty seriously removed from the current state of affairs in international relations, however they are entertaining none the less. Unlike other battlesets, the *Designers' Series* comes with a scenario manual which provides some initial background to each scenario as well as designer's notes. While the background writing could be stronger, the designer's notes provide a useful insight into the intentions of the scenario's creator.

A major theme in all of the battlesets is the change in the naval balance of power due to some of the new units introduced. New VTOL aircraft give even helicopter carriers a strong defensive AAW capability. The French and CIS CVs add another dimension, ending the US Navy's monopoly on naval power projection.

In many cases, an attempt has been made to take advantage of

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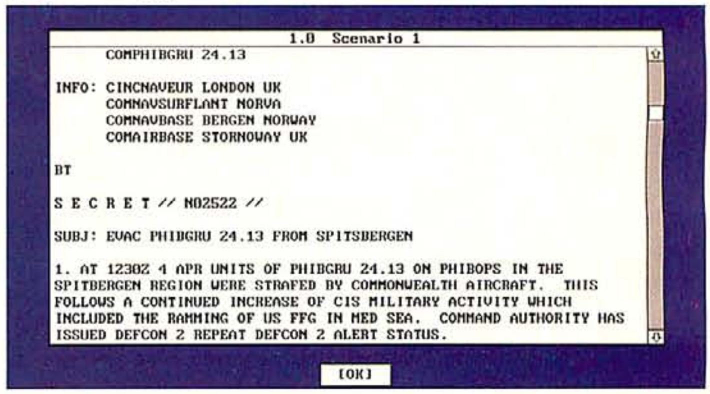


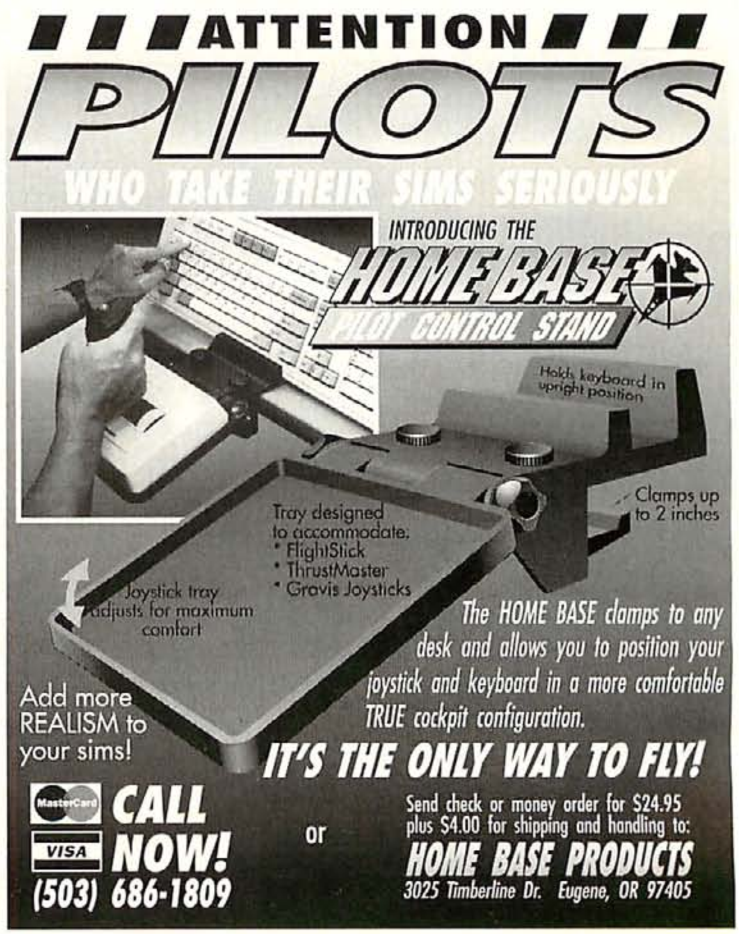
the current turbulence in world affairs to create innovative and ingenious situations upon which to base scenarios. While some inevitably end up as weak rationalizations for a CIS/Soviet-NATO confrontation, there are some commendably creative designs as well. For instance, one can take sides between the Baltic nations in a fight over the disputed territory in Kaliningrad, or repulse a Russian intervention in the Balkans. My personal favorite is the scenario that has NATO attempting to prevent the transit of Soviet made diesel subs to Third World countries with money to burn. (The U.S. protested the CIS sale of three Kilos to Iran on Sept 24, 1992, as this article was being written.)

In a change from past battlesets, the *Designers' Series* does not provide clear cut victory conditions. Instead, mission objectives are provided much as they would be in real life. This is an interesting twist, and it works well in many scenarios. However, in some cases the player is asked to do things that do not fit well with the *Harpoon* system. For instance, I was never very clear on how I was supposed to evacuate the U.S. 2nd Armored division from Germany, given that there are no provisions for this in the game mechanics.

A Refreshing Sea Breeze

The *Designers' Series* is a useful addition to the *Harpoon* system. While most players are unlikely to find all of the scenarios enjoyable, there is enough diversity to ensure that there is something for everyone. The additional platforms and the program modifications do not change the essence of the *Harpoon* system, but they do give it enough of a fresh feel to keep even hardened grognards happy. **CGW**





COMPANY REPORT

SIR-TECH

Wizardry's Family Infotree

Turning a House of Sand into a Castle of Silicon

by Johnny L. Wilson



The power generator of Heart Island Castle is a miniature version of the main castle located nearby.

On Heart Island, in the center of New York's "Thousand Island" region, sits a castle. Built for his new bride by the founder of New York City's Waldorf Astoria Hotel, the castle has reverted to New York State and is a popular tourist attraction which can only be reached by boat. Somehow it seems appropriate that *CGW*'s first glance at this castle occurred when we visited Norman and Robert Sirotek, respectively President and Vice-President of **Sir-Tech Software**. After all, their grandfather once owned a historic castle in Czechoslovakia. Frederick B. Sirotek, Sr., an architect and master builder, had purchased the castle and was approximately two-thirds finished with the remodeling and restoration process when the Communist regime took over. Now, his grandsons rule over a software company that, each year, sells millions of dollars of computer games based on castles, corridors and conjuring. Our impromptu cruise around Heart Island was also appropriate because the Sirotek's major passion outside the software industry is power boating. Living on the St. Lawrence River, the Siroteks get to "play" across an international boundary. That seems appropriate, as well, since they plan a global strategy for marketing *Wizardry* in nearly every conceivable country over the next few years.

Fred Sirotek Sr. escaped from Prague and came to Canada in a fascinating bit of intrigue in which he had to surrender the two handguns in his possession and all the family's capital (since it was mostly in real estate, accounts receivable and equities in companies seized by the Communists). Amazingly enough, the elder Sirotek and his son, Frederick Sirotek, Jr., were able to get a $1,000 credit line and about $500 together. They immediately began building custom homes on a "pay as you go" basis. Then, added small commercial buildings to their agenda (gas stations, in particular) and went on to government contracts such as the Wind Tunnel at the Ottawa Airport and a linear accelerator (as well as ion lab) for Canada's National Research Council.

The Roots of the Infotree

Entrepreneurial roots tend to stretch in many directions, however, and it wasn't too many years before Fred Sirotek, Jr. became involved in a novelty business with Cornell computer science student and soon-to-be *Wizardry* co-designer Robert Woodhead's mother, Janice. The novelty business used resin molds to form its products and sand is a vital component in the resin mold process. Indeed, the company used sand in such quantities that it had to be shipped in by rail. Since shipping rates were particularly volatile for the railroad industry in the late '70s and a penny's difference per pound could make or break the profitability of a given load, Janice suggested that her son write a computer program where they could enter the current rates and immediately know whether a load could be profitable or not.

Sirotek bought the idea, as well as a $7,000 Apple to implement it. So, Robert Woodhead entered the picture and, once he was successful with the rail rate program, moved on to handle the company's mailing list. He developed a mailing list manager qua database and thought it could be marketed on its own. He asked Fred Sirotek to allow him to take the Apple to the Trenton Computer Show and use it to demonstrate his mailing program, Infotree. When Sirotek discovered that Woodhead planned to fly to the computer show, he was adamant that there was no way he was going to put that expensive computer into the hands of some airline baggage handler.

Woodhead decided that if the baggage handling was the problem, he should just take the Apple in a carefully packed car. Unfortunately, Robert didn't drive. Fortunately, Norm Sirotek did. All Woodhead had to do was convince Norm to drive him to the show. Norm wasn't keen on the idea of spending a weekend with computer enthusiasts, but informed that Atlantic City wasn't too far away from Trenton, he readily agreed to provide transportation to the show in order to try his hand at the tables in Atlantic City.

After Norm cashed in his chips that weekend, he returned to pick up Robert and saw this enthusiastic crowd of people around the programmer. The family's entrepreneurial spirit kicked in and Norm began to see the potential for a business. So, whether he won in Atlantic City or not, he became a winner when he returned to the show. On the long drive home, he excitedly began to query Woodhead on other potential products for the computer. They talked about the possibilities for a science fiction game and the basic idea for *Galactic Attack* took root during the drive home.

Naturally, their father (Fred Sirotek Jr.) was not immediately convinced. He told his sons that "Computers are not for games, they're business machines." The grandsons of the master builder were absolutely crushed. At least, they were crushed until Fred decided on another way to approach the investment. "I said to myself," said the father, "how much could I lose by bankrolling this venture? Probably less than what it would cost to send my sons to Harvard Business School, and here was an opportunity for them to acquire hands-on business experience from the ground up."

With the father's capital in place and Woodhead working on *Galactic Attack*, it seemed like nothing could stop the business from snowballing toward success. With the venture netting solid sales on *Galactic Attack*, Woodhead brought another product to the Sirotek's attention. He had played a game designed by a fellow student at Cornell University, Andrew Greenberg. Greenberg had taken his satisfaction at playing in face-to-face role-playing romps and turned them into a fantasy role-playing game on the computer.

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With the agreement of the Siroteks, Greenberg and Woodhead began to polish that game for release as *Dungeons of Despair*.

Alert readers will notice that this name has two capital letter "D"s in its title, much like both the most successful "people and paper" role-playing system in the world and a recent entry into that market which is, currently, under litigation. People who believe in karmic retribution will also be amused that the same E. Gary Gygax who, as chairman of **TSR**'s board, threatened litigation against the Siroteks when they started to market *Dungeons of Despair* at 1981's Boston Apple Fest is the designer of the Dangerous Journeys system (originally *Dangerous Dimensions)* system against which **TSR** has currently initiated legal action.

Dungeons of Despair, of course, became *Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord.* In plastic bags with photocopied manuals, the original *Wizardry* hit the 100,000 sales mark in its first year of sales. During that time, the Siroteks and Robert Woodhead managed to produce the game out of a 100 square foot area which they rented from their parent's novelty business. Today, the company has published seven different *Wizardry* adventures in a variety of formats, as well as a utility designed to print out *Wizardry* characters.

The family's entrepreneurial spirit also led the Siroteks to help establish what was once the largest software distributor in Canada. They worked with a fellow named Shannon Edwards, who owned a major East Coast distributorship. Edwards would supply dealers at the Boston Apple Fest out of the back of a semi-truck stocked with product, saving the publishers the trouble of bringing mass quantities of the product to the shows. They decided to enter the Canadian market, so Edwards, the Siroteks and a family friend named Len Francescini ran Frantek Software Distribution from 1983-1987. In 1987, the company was sold to Micro-D and became part of the Ingram's acquisition of Micro-D. Why did they sell? They saw the future as bringing larger and larger distributorships into the picture and elected to return to their core business.

Branching Out

Today, visitors to **Sir-Tech Software** are most likely to be overwhelmed by the intense focus on *Wizardry*. Although the popular series has not been the only product from the company (Sir-Tech has published software as varied as *The Clan* accounting package, the children's program *Police Artist*, arcade games like *Star Maze* and *Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs*, polygon-filled simulations like *Deep Space*, and the action/adventure *Seven Spirits of RA*) it has truly been their mainstay. Their marketing emphasis in Japan has brought about audio-CDs with narrated *Wizardry* adventures; licensed anime (animated cartoons) and manga (comic books) with *Wizardry* characters; and a vast array of plastic models and lead figures based on the series.

Once one looks beyond the obvious marketing/licensing success of Sir-Tech's strategic alliance with Japan's **ASCII Corporation** (begun in November, 1984), the most fascinating part of Sir-Tech is its employees. Any "Who's Who" of Sir-Tech employees would have to include documentation author Brenda Garno who not only plays every CRPG out there, but writes the *Wizardry* manuals (especially those with reference to pumpkin man, the stuffed doll the entire company bounces off ceiling fans to relieve stress, and Elvis) and maintains all of Sir-Tech's on-line support. In addition, Phil Mitchell in customer support is the fellow who has to deal with replacement requests (one came addressed to "Dear Tech Support God-Like Beings") such as the one from a gamer whose brother's girlfriend's 14-month old baby chewed on five different disks and the young gamer whose mother kept the documentation look-up sheet when his father retained custody during a messy



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divorce proceeding. His favorite phone call? "I've been up since three this morning, waiting for you to get in."

Todd Ashley heads up the hint lines. His job is to help gamers through the worlds of *Wizardry*, but alert listeners can sometimes hear him say, "We don't usually help with *Ultima VI*, but here's what you do …" The Sir-Tech spirit exudes from Barry Kiah who was so excited about preparing to preside over the chaos of shipping 37,000 copies of *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* (over the first weekend finished materials were available) that he couldn't wait to look up the very first *Crusaders* order from over a year ago and see that Denny Workman of Redondo Beach, CA would get the first production copy. The playful corporate spirit invades fax machines all over the world as the PR and Marketing duo of Lori Sears and Shari Mitchell infuse their vital info with playful practical jokes and hilarious captions.

The push for quality continues with David Bradley's design to allow *Crusaders* to take up less space on the hard drive than the current state of the art (its 243 compressed files on the hard disk decompress during play so that it only takes 5.4 MB for the program and advises gamers to allocate 6.5 MB to make sure there is room for saved games) and with Ian Currie's design for a mission-based espionage game that would be heavy on personality-based interaction and real-time combat. Both designers function as team leaders in out-of-house design shops. Not only do they function as developers for Sir-Tech, but they also serve as a potential "farm team" for future leaders of design teams.

Room At The Top

The reference to the future is appropros, as well. Even though Sir-Tech's past is totally dependent on the *Wizardry* series, the company's executives continually keep an eye on the future. Rob Sirotek has explained to *CGW* that 1992 has been a year of entering new markets. The company has experienced phenomenal success in Asia and is participating in several strategic alliances across Europe that could provide a larger sales base in Europe, as well as an infusion of new products to be imported into the U.S.

Next year, according to both Siroteks, will be a year of product line expansion. The goal is to stabilize the existing product line with more products, both within and without the world of *Wizardry*. They sincerely want to broaden their line-up so that they are neither thought of as a "one product company" nor as a CRPG-only company. To do so, should present the most interesting challenges Sir-Tech has faced since the earliest days of *Wizardry*.

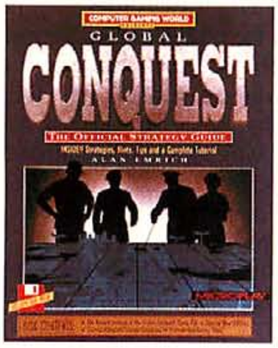
Asked if the company was ready to participate in new technologies (optical storage, interactive video, connectivity games and SVGA graphics), Rob Sirotek stated that the company had been looking toward new technologies for years. Randall Bore, the designer of *Seven Spirits of RA*, had left hooks in the game for a CD-I version of the game which they had hoped to release when the platform became stable. Unfortunately, neither the game nor the platform were well-received enough to justify such a product. Norm Sirotek suggested that the company had strategic partners in Asia that would enable them to compete in new technologies when the actual platforms were ready. "Interactive video will *not* cause us to fade away."

In summary, **Sir-Tech Software** is a company rooted in an entrepreneurial heritage. The Siroteks haven't actually built a castle (though they would sure like to regain their grandfather's), but they have built a successful business and seem as ready to plow through the rough waters of new technologies and business expansion with as much enthusiasm as they pilot their power boat in poker runs along the St. Lawrence. CGW

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- James Lovelock

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- Jerry Pournelle, BYTE Magazine

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The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook

by Johnny L. Wilson   Osborne McGraw-Hill $14.95

Each time we read this book we learned something, because it explains the theory behind the game and doesn't just list one-two-three hints.

- START Magazine

Use order form bound into this magazine to order books.

Taking A Peek

The Avalon Hill Game Co.
Baltimore, MD
(800) 999-3222

DIPLOMACY: Set in pre-WWI Europe, seven Great Powers vie for supremacy as they maneuver their armies and fleets across an area map of Europe. This is a new version of an old program, with a lot more spark coming off the flying daggers aimed at players' backs. New AI routines go along with the upgraded sound and graphics, making the computer players particularly treacherous when the higher competition levels are selected. (Hey, when Avalon Hill's own *Diplomacy* guru, Rex Martin, gets hosed by the computer — that's saying something!) MS-DOS gamers take note: an IBM version is being packaged in the new box but it's *not* the new version, yet. Amiga ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Colorado Spectrum
Fort Collins, CO
(800) 238-5983

THE MOUSE WHEEL: The innovative people who brought us the *Mouse Yoke* have steered their venture in a new direction. Using a clamp contraption with a widget, driving buffs can strap down their mouse and take the wheel of their favorite driving simulation. While it takes a bit of getting used to, the wheel adds an extra bit of realism to games that one normally controls with the mouse. Comes with Broderbund's 1990 release, *Stunts*. ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Columbia Games, Inc.
POB 3457, Blaine, WA 98230
(800) 663-8453 / (604) 873-6591

COMPUTER EASTFRONT FOR WINDOWS: Sold as a computer "player aid" for the popular wooden block wargame, *EastFront*, this product features a faithful translation of the boardgame for the computer. Including neither an artificial opponent nor a printed map or rules manual (the latter are available separately), *Computer EastFront* is a play-by-modem/email kit for enthusiasts of the board wargame. *EastFront*, by the way, has won many accolades and awards in the board wargaming community and covers the Russian front of WWII at a strategic level using a unique command and battle system. IBM, for Windows only ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

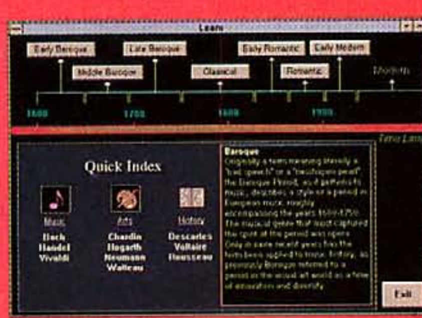


Diplomacy


Mouse Wheel


Computer Eastfront


Zoo Keeper



Composer Quest

Davidson
Torrance, CA
(800) 545-7677

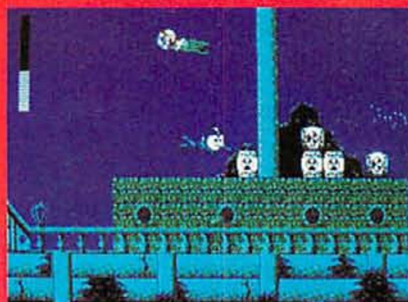
ZOO KEEPER: Something tells me it's all happening at the zoo — perhaps it's the latest release from one of the leading developers of kidware. Like most of the edutainment packages on the shelves, this one can easily be compared with Carmen SanDiego. Trouble is brewing at the zoo, instigated by a group of slothful ne'er-do-wells. Eager young beavers must follow on the trail of the bad guys, cleaning up their messes or feeding the animals (one or the otter), and capturing the rowdies before they perpetrate any more monkey-business (upholding the maxim "cheetahs never prosper"). Eagle-eyed players will notice lots of animated creatures and 50+ digitized photos of zoo animals. Young zoologists will have a whale of a time as they work their way from Cage-Cleaner to Head Zoo Keeper (and I'm not lion). IBM with VGA card ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

Dr. T's Music Software
Needham, MA
(617) 455-1454

COMPOSER QUEST: Name that tune! This multi-media Music Appreciation course gives players two ways to explore the classics of Western music. In the learning mode, the player can browse the world of music by choosing stylistic periods from a timeline, with each period highlighting the most important composers of the era. Along with very poorly digitized photos of each composer comes a brief bio of the individual and samples of his work. Unfortunately, the player only gets to hear about 20 seconds of a piece, each usually ending at a particularly interesting spot. On an even more disturbing note, many of the composers included do not have music to sample from (there's only one piece from the Modern Era and only one piece in the *entire* jazz section — potentially leading the naive user to believe Joplin's "The Entertainer" is all that jazz is about). The quest portion of the game is a rather contrived bit, the gist being that the player must listen to a piece of music and identify its author. Top these weaknesses off with a rather poorly implemented interface and a stiff price tag (one could easily go baroque), and what seemed to be a promising piece of multimedia edutainment, ends on a rather sour note. IBM CD-ROM ($99.00). Circle Reader Service #5.



The Addams Family



Mega Man 3



Air Bucks



Plan 9 From Outer Space



Utopia

Hi Tech Expressions
New York, NY
(212) 941-1224

THE ADDAMS FAMILY PRINT GALLERY: Doo-do doo-do — click click. Yes folks, don the ghoulish garb and get those fingers snapping. The latest glorified clip art collection from Hi-Tech features America's favorite undead family. Gomez, Morticia, Fester, Lurch and the rest of the gang are ready and waiting to model for calendars, posters, stationery and whatever else calls for a little splash of pallor. It will even lend one's desk top creations a hand. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

MEGA MAN 3: Lube up the arrow keys and batten down the carpals because action gaming's favorite android has made the biggest leap of his many lives — the platform leap. Players can run, jump and shoot-shoot-shoot their way into a Non-Emotive Stupor (NES) (which is not unlike Sub-Emotional Gaming Autism (SEGA)), as MegaMan has to face his toughest foes yet. He has to duel Bit Man, Shark Man, Wave Man, Oil Man, Blade Man and Torch Man (oh horrors!) on "seven rapid-fire levels of action and excitement." This is one that will certainly raise the player to the next level of the action-gaming enlightenment — transcendental vegetation. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Impressions
7 Melrose Drive
Farmington, CT 06032-9812

AIR BUCKS: For those who love to build up economic empires, this business simulation is akin to *Railroad Tycoon* with wings. Players begin after WWII and try to build up a profitable airline through 1985. Three opponents (who can be either computer players or human controlled) provide the competition as landing rights are secured, stocks bought and sold, loans taken, new aircraft purchased and the perils of rising fuel costs are faced. Definitely for the spreadsheet conquerors out there, *Air Bucks* is undeniably the best offering yet from Impressions. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Konami
Buffalo Grove, IL
(708) 215-5100

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE: Even if Bela Lugosi is dead, his work lives on — which goes to show that one can attain fame if they strive to be the worst that they can be. In this adventure game, based upon what is widely held to be the worst movie ever created, players take on the role of a private dick hired by a Hollyweird studio to find the stolen original cut of *Plan 9*. Apparently, Bela Lugosi's double in the film, jealous of his infamy, has stolen the reel and, like a wayward network exec, has re-edited and colorized the film, replacing every scene featuring Lugosi with those depicting himself. The player must recover the scattered pieces of the film and re-edit it frame-by-frame to ensure that Lugosi won't avoid blame for this classic celluloid catastrophe. With a rather crude interface and campy graphics, this game evokes the right celebratory feel to *honor* its predecessor. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

UTOPIA: This is a hybrid strategy game that crosses elements of *SimCity* with those of *Powermonger*. See the preview in the September *CGW*, #98. Amiga, IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

LWS Software
Havertown, PA
(215) 449-9767

STRATEGIC VIDEO POKER: It is fairly common knowledge that the fastest growing game in casinos for the past few years has been *Video Poker*. A computerized mini-magnum opus on the subject of *Video Poker*, *Strategic Video Poker* offers an amazing diversity of game variations, including differing payoffs (featuring both the Las Vegas and Atlantic City styles). Variations include wild Jokers and deuces, plus altered coin values (which might also affect the odds). Study menus have been added so that statistics can be easily kept track of. This one is definitely a high hand at the showdown among computer *Video Poker* games. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Maxis
Orinda, CA
(510) 254-9700

SIMLIFE: From those wacky Simulated Designers at Maxis comes the ultimate neo-Darwinian jungle-gym. Players design a complete ecosystem from the planet to the highest organisms in the food web (the Scientifically Correct term for the food chain). Wielding the power of a god-like genetic engineer, players design their own creatures by specifying traits in their genetic structure — with the potential for



Mindcraft presents: ***Siege***. Finally, a strategic simulation of pulse pounding, thought provoking medieval style castle assault.

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MINDCRAFT

2291 205th Street, Suite 201, Torrance, CA 90501

Actual screen photos from the IBM VGA version.

Circle Reader Service #109

creating a phantasmagoric menagerie of hybrid species. One can watch a million years of evolution pass in minutes as creatures mutate and speciate according to the capricious winds of selective pressure. Of course the player-as-not-so-Blind-Watchmaker can reach down into the equation and fiddle around with all of the mechanics of life. Like the other SimProducts, players have the joy of calling down all sorts of biblical disasters on their creations, happy events like: plagues, heat waves, cold waves, floods, and sexually transmitted diseases. Also like other SimProducts, the game features several scenarios with explicit goals and an experimental mode in which one can toy around. This is certainly the most complex and narrowly focused game in the SimLine — great fun for the casual biologist and student of artificial life. Mac ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

MicroProse
Hunt Valley, MD
(410) 771-1151

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: Open the bomb bay door, Hal! Actually, the player will get little assistance (or resistance) from a computer in this simulation of the airwar over WWII Europe. The player has full control of the B-17 as he fills the worn-out boots of every person on the behemoth bomber, from both pilot and co-pilot to bombardier to ball-turret gunner. Like other be-all do-all simulations (like **Epyx**'s old *Destroyer*, and **Three-Sixty**'s *MegaFortress*), the action can be intense and the player can become quite harried as he tries to run from station to station, piloting to nav points, lining up bombing runs, performing field patchwork on injured crew mates, and fighting off pesky German ME 109s. While the graphics aren't cutting edge and it has its share of gremlins in the mechanics, fans of the period may want to give this one a fly-by. IBM ($69.95). Circle #13.

Origin Systems
Austin, TX
(512) 328-0282

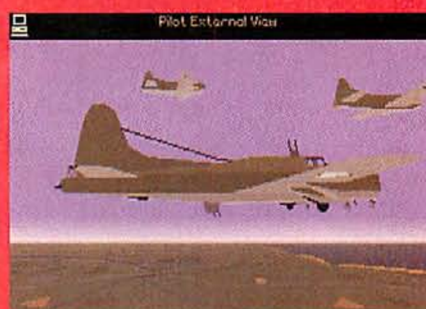
ULTIMA VII — FORGE OF VIRTUE: Wait! Don't zap that *Ultima VII* directory just yet. Players may have spanked the collective behinds of the Fellowship but there is still more to do and see in Britannia. With the wave of one's magic card of credit, it is possible to get the latest patch to the system and add brand new real estate



Strategic Video Poker



Simlife



B-17 Flying Fortress



Ultima VII



Red Zone

to Lord British's domain, ready-made with new characters and quests. Briefly, the new story runs something like this: Lord British had built an island in preparation for the coming Avatar (sometime pre UIV we presume). This island was home to three shrines of virtue (love, truth, courage — Amo-Ver-Cor!) each guarded by all sorts of nasty traps to ensure that only the Avatar could make use of them. Unfortunately, in a record case of continental plate slip (whoops!), the island disappeared before the Avatar arrived. Of course, now the island has reappeared and there is trouble brewing. New evil in Britannia? Or do the forces of darkness have a recycling plan? IBM. Circle Reader Service #14.

Psygnosis
Brookline, MA
(617) 731-3553

RED ZONE: The chaps across the pond have fired another product out of their software machine — the one with its levers set to simple, hot and shallow. Players ride super-horse-powered racing bikes on 10 different tracks around the globe, vying for enough victory points to be crowned the Champeen Of The World. The game sports a number of options that control realism and the level of graphic detail. At its best, the graphics are of the very rough polygon sort, though the action can be quite intense. Naturally, of course, like most Psygnosis games, it is a great testosterone pumper when one needs to unwind. Amiga ($49.99). Circle #15.

Sanctuary Woods
Victoria, British Columbia
(604) 380-7582

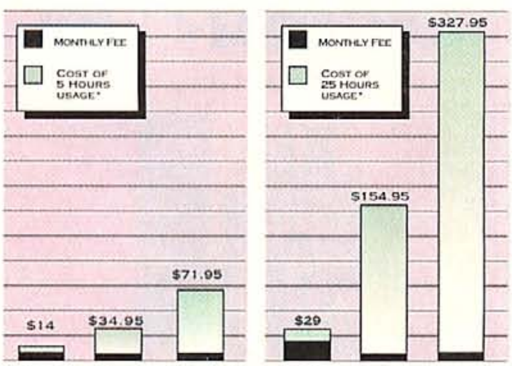
VICTOR VECTOR & YONDO — THE VAMPIRE'S COFFIN: From a brand new multi-media developer in the Great White North comes this light-weight adventure of paradoxical time-meddling. The player commands special agents Yondo, the cybernetically enhanced St. Bernard, and his human, Victor Vector, as they attempt to save history from itself by pilfering artifacts of power from the past for safe keeping in their museum of the future. The dangerous object of this mission is, as the title implies, the coffin of Count Dracula. Heavier on the flash and light than on adventure gaming substance, this product is more of a talking comic book than the typical graphic adventure. The game features a full music score and voice track

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(Victor and Yondo will banter between themselves every step of the way) but both the voice acting and the script are pretty weak. CD-ROM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

Sierra On-Line
Coarsegold, CA
(800) 326-6654

QUEST FOR GLORY III: WAGES OF WAR: The people on the hill are at the peak of their game in this adventure — Lori and Corey Cole's eagerly awaited third installment in their acclaimed series. In continuing to pursue their vision of a replayable adventure game, the Coles have designed this adventure to include multiple solutions to its many puzzles. As in the earlier games, players may choose one of three character types (thief, magic user, paladin), each with their own set of battle options and unique skills (i.e. magic users have a large repertoire of spells, paladins have a smaller group of specialized spells, thieves have a bag of tricks for stealthy solutions). The graphics are standard for Sierra, that is, stunning, and the animation only continues to improve. Set in the savannas and jungles of Taarna, a world modeled after the both the ancient Egyptian and deep jungle civilizations of Africa, this story has character and will be an unqualified hit with adventure gaming crowd. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

SSI
Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 737-6800

THE SUMMONING: SSI breaks free from its AD&D formula long enough to publish this role-playing game with some original mechanics. Players guide a single adventurer through 40 levels of 3-D isometric dungeons following the typical script — fighting creatures in real-time, using magic with an original system involving hand-gestures, having terse conversations with NPCs, and following the story to one of its promised multiple endings. An interesting feature is the ability to print out the maps created by the automapping system. Previewed in *CGW* #100. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #18.



Victor Vector & Yondo-The Vampire's Coffin



Quest For Glory III: Wages Of War



The Summoning



The Mac Shareware 500



Zug's Race Through Space

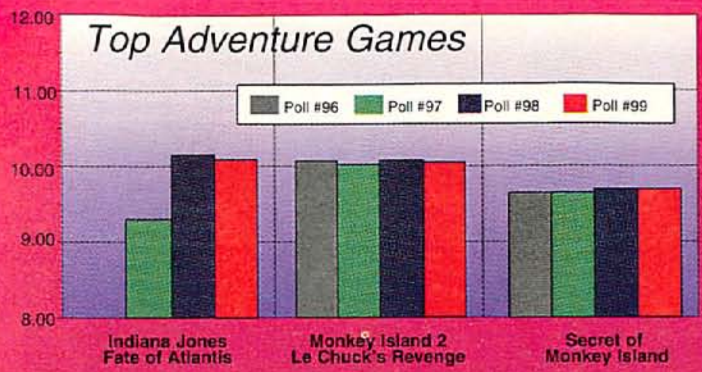
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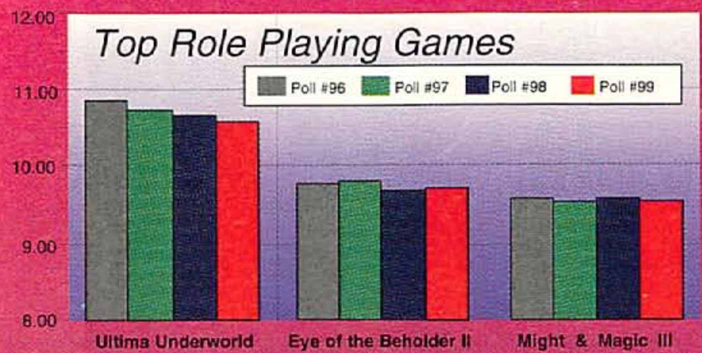
THE MAC SHAREWARE 500: Though we don't usually feature books in this section, we thought a book that came with 4 disks packed with 500 shareware programs might be of interest. Among the 500 programs are a few games, but these are of the type and quality that one typically associates with public domain stuff. It includes several versions of the old, two-player *Artillery* game and a few *Missile Command* clones among other coffee break games. While the games are weak, this package is ideal for the new computer user who doesn't yet have a library of basic utilities, fonts, communication programs, file compression programs and desk top accessories. Along with descriptions of the programs, the 400 page book is loaded with good novice tips on hardware, BBSs, memory, and everything else computer adepts assume is a part of every human's common knowledge. Mac ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

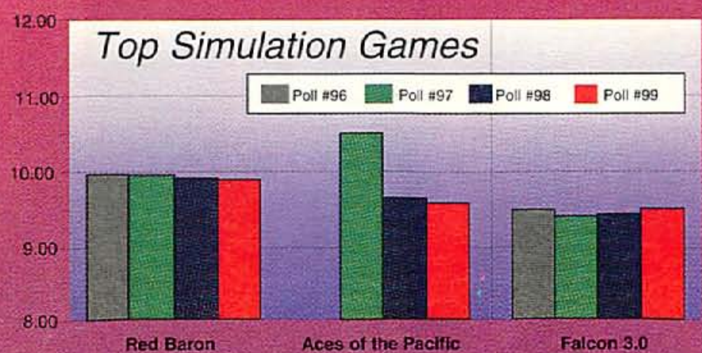
ZugWare
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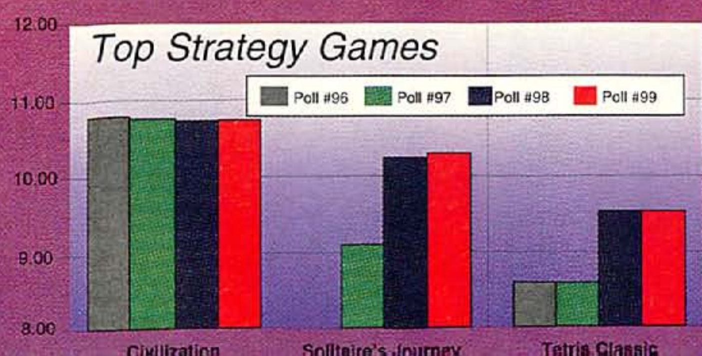
ZUG'S RACE THROUGH SPACE: Following in the wake of success created by his three previous edutainment releases, Zug the Edusaurus has launched a new enterprise — the Dinosaur Dinner Delivery service. His goal is to be the best fast-food delivery service in the solar system, but first he'll have to beat the competition — Mr. Bronto and his chain of Burger Blaster restaurants. To outsell Mr. Bronto, Zug has employed players from age 5 to 12 to help him decipher cryptic delivery notices and get the Dino-Dinners to their correct address in space. As young ones help Zug sling hash around the solar system they'll learn about their immediate universe (the position, atmosphere, size and history of neighboring planets as well as interesting deep space phenomena) in addition to improving their inductive reasoning skills. Like Zug's previous two games (*Spelling Adventures* and *Adventures on Eco-Island*), this game features a speech system (with appropriate sound card) that allows Zug to rap with kids along the way. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #20.


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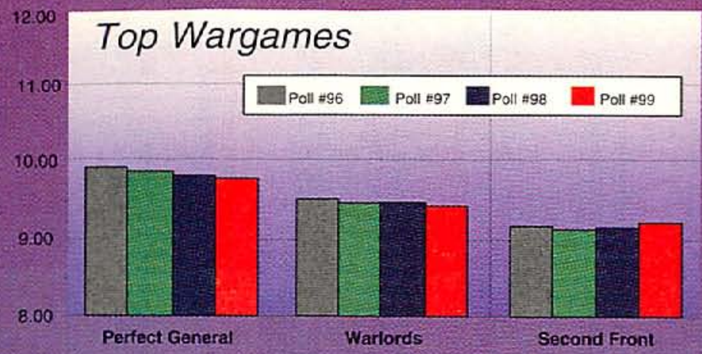


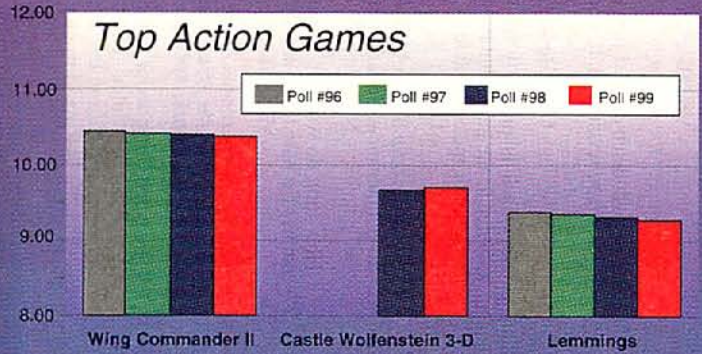
Top 100 Games

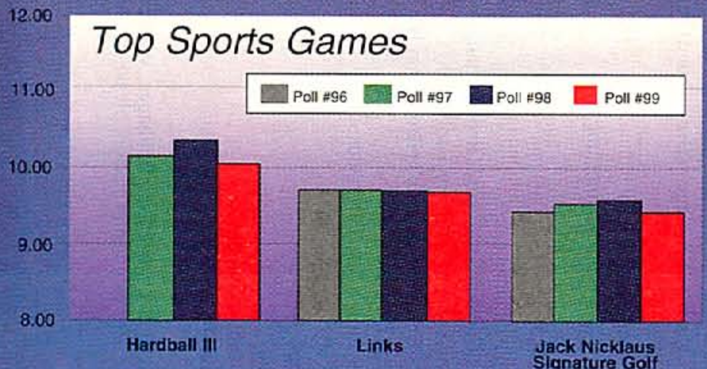
Reader Poll #99
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
The Magazine of Interactive Entertainment

Review

1	Civilization	MicroProse	ST	10.74
2	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.55
3	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.39
4	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	10.30
5	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	10.10
6	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	10.05
7	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	10.04
8	Red Baron	Dynamix	SI	9.90
9	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.77
10	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	AD	9.70
11	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.69
12	Links	Access	SP	9.68
13	Castle Wolfenstein 3-D	Apogee	AC	9.66
14	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.60
15	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	ST	9.59
16	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	AD	9.55
17	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.51
	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.51
19	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.47
20	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.46
21	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.45
22	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.39
23	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	SI	9.33
24	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	9.32
25	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.23
26	Wings	Cinemaware	AC	9.22
27	Conflict: Korea	SSI	WG	9.21
28	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.13
29	Gunship 2000	Microprose	SI	9.12
30	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.11
	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
32	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	9.08
33	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	9.06
34	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	9.05
	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	9.05
36	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	9.04
	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	AD	9.04
38	Ultima V	Origin	RP	9.00
	Quest for Glory	Sierra	AD,RP	9.00
40	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
	Western Front	SSI	WG	8.98
42	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	8.97
	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	8.97
	Police Quest 3	Sierra	AD	8.97
45	Battlehawks 1942	Lucasfilm	AC,SI	8.96
	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.96
47	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST,SI	8.95
	Wasteland	Electronic Arts	RP	8.95
49	Pools of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.94
50	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	8.93







	Overrun	SSI	WG	8.93
52	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	8.92
53	Falcon	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.90
	F-117A	MicroProse	SI	8.90
55	Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf	Accolade	ST	8.89
	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix	AD	8.89
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.89
58	NFL Challenge	XOR Corporation	ST	8.87
59	Romance of the 3 Kingdoms	Koei	ST,RP	8.86
60	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SP	8.85
	Super Tetris	Spectrum HoloByte	AC,ST	8.85
62	Populous	Electronic Arts	ST	8.84
63	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
64	Command HQ	MicroPlay	WG,ST	8.81
	Might & Magic II	New World Computing	RP	8.81
	Rules of Engagement	Mindcraft	ST	8.81
	Tracon	Wesson International	ST	8.81
	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	8.81
69	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	8.80
70	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
71	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78
72	Bard's Tale III	Electronic Arts	RP	8.77
73	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
74	Covert Action	MicroProse	AC,AD	8.73
75	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	8.72
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	8.72
	Gateway	Legend	AD	8.72
78	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	8.71
	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	8.71
	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	SP	8.71
81	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	8.70
82	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	8.69
83	Action Stations	RAW Entertainment	WG	8.68
84	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	8.67
	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	8.67
86	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	SP	8.66
87	Indiana Jones/Graphic Adv.	LucasArts	AD	8.65
	Ballistyx	Psygnosis	AC	8.65
89	Armada 2525	Interstel	ST	8.63
90	Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda Softworks	AC,ST	8.62
	Megafortress	Three-Sixty Pacific	SI,ST	8.62
92	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	8.61
93	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	SP	8.60
	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	SP	8.60
95	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.59
	Wide World of Sports Boxing	Data East	SP	8.59
97	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	8.57
	Carrier Strike	SSI	WG	8.57
99	Chessmaster 2100	Software Toolworks	ST	8.56
	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	AC,RP	8.56

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

Prepared by Golden Data Services.

What's Hot

PC Research Hits List of Top-Selling Software

August, 1992

PC Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Links (Access)
2.	Civilization (MicroProse)
3.	Aces of the Pacific (Sierra On-Line)
4.	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis (Lucasfilm Games)
5.	Quest for Glory I (Sierra On-Line)
6.	Legend of Kyrandia (Virgin Games)
7.	F117A Stealth Fighter 2.0 (MicroProse)
8.	Powermonger (Electronic Arts)
9.	Gunship 2000 (MicroProse)
10.	Darklands (MicroProse)
11.	Hardball III (Accolade)
12.	Monopoly (Virgin Games)
13.	Ultima VII (Origin)
14.	Sim City (Maxis)
15.	Dagger of Amon Ra: Laura Bow II (Sierra On-Line)
16.	A-Train (Maxis)
17.	Dark Seed (Cyberdreams)
18.	Star Trek 25th Anniversary (Interplay)
19.	Realms (Virgin Games)
20.	Flight Simulator 4.0 (Microsoft)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Civilization (MicroProse)
2.	Links (Access)
3.	Dark Queen of Krynn (Strategic Simulations)
4.	AD&D Eye of the Beholder II (Strategic Simulations)
5.	688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Sim City Supreme (Maxis)
2.	Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego? (Broderbund)
3.	Prince of Persia (Broderbund)
4.	Lost Treasures of Infocom (Activision)
5.	Might & Magic I & II (New World Computing)

Home Education (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego? (Broderbund)
2.	Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing (Software Toolworks)
3.	Where in the U.S.A. is Carmen Sandiego? (Broderbund)
4.	New Math Blaster Plus (Davidson)
5.	Your Personal Trainer for the S.A.T. (Davidson)
6.	Algeblaster Plus (Davidson)
7.	Body Works (Automap)
8.	Playroom (Broderbund)
9.	Reader Rabbit I (Learning Company)
10.	Mario Typing (Interplay)

This list is based on units sold by Software Etc., Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You Have Been Playing Lately

The Feedback Forum of Reader Response

Beginning in issue #93 we added a new question to our CGW Poll cards. Along with the list of games to be rated (which is the basis for the Top 100 Chart and serves as a lasting indication of which games are quality works and which are not) we also wanted to know which games have grabbed you, which are hot, which keep you up into the wee hours, which have become the foundation of your spouse's divorce filing. The following list was composed by adding up the number of times a game was written into the blank line provided on the CGW Poll card and putting them into rank. Since the data for this column will not be accumulated over time, this list will be more dynamic and will serve as a good indication of just which games have been responsible for the greatest loss in GHP (gross human productivity).

Feedback from CGW #97, August 1992:

1. Civilization (MicroProse)
2. Darklands (MicroProse)
3. Ultima VII (Origin)
4. Aces of the Pacific (Dynamix)
5. Falcon 3.0 — Fighting Tiger (Spectrum HoloByte)
6. The Perfect General (QQP)
7. Links 386 Pro (Access)
8. Wolfenstein 3-D (Apogee)
9. Ultima Underworld (Origin)
10. Solitaire's Journey (QQP)

Interesting responses of the month:

Multiplayer Battletech (GEnie) "And the bill is the scarriest thing I've ever seen."
"Just waiting — summer doldrums"
The Dagger of Larry Bowman IV
Tangled Tales
Castle of the Winds (shareware)
Darklands, Darklands, and more Darklands

Quotes of note:

"I got *Pirates* for 99 cents when I bought *Global Conquest* through a promotion from MicroProse. I can see why *Pirates* is in the CGW Hall of Fame. Great game."
- Von Bismarck. Pittsburgh, PA

[Ed: You got the gaming deal of the decade.]

"I've just discovered *Pirates* at my local electronics store. I'm glad MicroProse reissued it. It's outstanding, even compared to today's complex games!"
- Chaz Berkheiser. Stratford, CT

"*Darklands* is probably the best computer game ever made. I got so addicted to the game that it eventually led to an ultimatum from my wife: the game or me!. My wife looks better than the computer and won."
- Tiro.

"I wish *Darklands* would work better. I have received the patch disk & I still get memory allocation errors. Otherwise, I love the game."
- Nameless. Van Nuys, CA

"How long do we have to get these cards filled out and mailed off each month? I'd hate to think it too late to be counted."
- Mike Alderfer. Houston, TX

[Ed: For the purposes of the CGW Poll, we need to receive them about 2-3 weeks after the issue has arrived in the mail/hit the stands. You did just fine this month, Mike.]

"The worst thing about living in Australia is that I get CGW two months after it's been printed. The best thing is that when I do get it, the great games are just hitting the shops."
- Roland Inman. Canberra, Australia

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Gaming World's Hall of Fame* have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which *CGW* has in its possession. Each month, we will highlight at least two of these games as part of this listing.

The Bard's Tale (Electronic Arts, 1985)
Many formats

Chessmaster 2000 (Software Toolworks, 1986)
Many formats

Dungeon Master (FTL Software, 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Earl Weaver Baseball (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

Empire (Interstel, 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM

F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, 1988)
IBM

Gettysburg: The Turning Point (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM

Gunship (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, C-64, IBM

Harpoon (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

Kampfgruppe (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many formats

King's Quest V (Sierra, 1990)
Amiga, IBM

M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, IBM

Mech Brigade (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many formats

Might & Magic (New World Computing, 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM, Mac

M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64

Pirates (MicroProse, 1987)
Many formats

Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

SimCity (Maxis, 1987)
Many formats

Starflight (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Sega

Their Finest Hour (LucasArts, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima III (Origin, 1983)
Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM

Ultima IV (Origin, 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima VI (Origin, 1990)
Amiga, IBM

War in Russia (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple

Wing Commander (Origin, 1991)
IBM, Sega

Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many formats

Zork (Infocom, 1981)
Many formats

The Bard's Tale

Electronic Arts, 1985
Many Formats



The Bard's Tale excelled within the conventions of the CRPG genre of its day and established the state-of-the-art for 3-point animated monsters and 3-D mazes presented in color (both in "windowed" presentations). The look and feel of the series became CRPG standards. Later, *The Bard's Tale III* was one of the earliest games with automapping, another CRPG innovation which became widely used.

Chessmaster

Software Toolworks, 1986
Many Formats



Chessmaster 2000 quickly became the standard against which all computer chess programs were to be measured. It was, arguably, the strongest chess program of its time when it was introducted into the *CGW* Hall of Fame and has constantly improved through the 2100 level and the current 3000 incarnation of the game.



Anatomy of a Rumor

by Johnny L. Wilson

State of the Magazine: At *CGW*, we are sometimes criticized for taking our jobs too seriously. This month, we take you behind the scenes of computer game journalism in order to let you see just how seriously we do approach our job and what the effects of haphazard reporting might accomplish.

Thursday, September 3 (1:30 P.M. PDT): Only six working days from sending the biggest issue in our history to press, the entire staff was overworked and under stress. The phone rang. A well-connected industry source asked if I knew what company Electronic Arts was planning to purchase on Friday. I suggested several possibilities, but my source stunned me with the rumor that EA planned to acquire Origin Systems. I promised to check matters out and get back to my source if we could find confirming evidence.

Before 2:00 P.M., I had informed my publisher, Russell Sipe, about the rumor. We formed a battle plan and sauntered forth to land the rumor. Before approaching official channels, however, we usually prefer to harvest the industry grapevine and glean enough evidence to have a chance at catching and throwing back any red herrings the companies involved might care to foist off on us. By 2:30 P.M., we suspected the rumor was true. Sources within and without both companies were able to verify a recent West Coast trip by Origin's principal officers and shareholders (Robert and Richard Garriott); speculation about a potential stock swap; and scenarios regarding possible ongoing talks between the companies.

Before 4:00 P.M., we were trying to contact official channels at Origin Systems. Since this was 6:00 P.M. in Austin, I couldn't get through the switchboard. Sipe tried the home numbers for both of the Garriotts. Having had no luck, I contacted an after hours number at Origin and left a message for an employee who might be able to contact Robert on our behalf. Not informing him about the reason for needing to talk to Robert, I simply said it was an urgent matter. He returned the call later to my voicemail and said that Robert would be calling later that night.

It was getting late and we realized that we were not going to be able to file a story about the acquisition on PRODIGY's Game Center if we didn't move quickly. We called Electronic Arts Public Relations and told them that we were following up on a rumor that EA had just purchased Origin. One PR professional was very cool as she said, "We did? How very nice for us!" I realized she had neither confirmed nor denied anything and asked her to transfer me to her supervisor. Her supervisor countered with an outlandish rumor and attempted to obfuscate the issue by saying that there were always rumors. Fortunately, we were armed with enough information to sharpen the challenge. There was a long pause. We took that as a good sign. We pressed the advantage. We were urged to consider it a rumor, even when we pressed for a denial.

The long pause, the unanswered call from Robert Garriott and the information from earlier sources made us virtually certain that the rumor was solid. We agreed that we were 95% sure, but noted that it was that 5% that could undermine our credibility in the future, should we be proven wrong. Since the stock market had already closed for Thursday, we were certain that either Origin, EA or both would have confirmed the rumor if they planned to announce the information before market opening on Friday, September 4. So, we held off on the story until we could get more definitive confirmation.

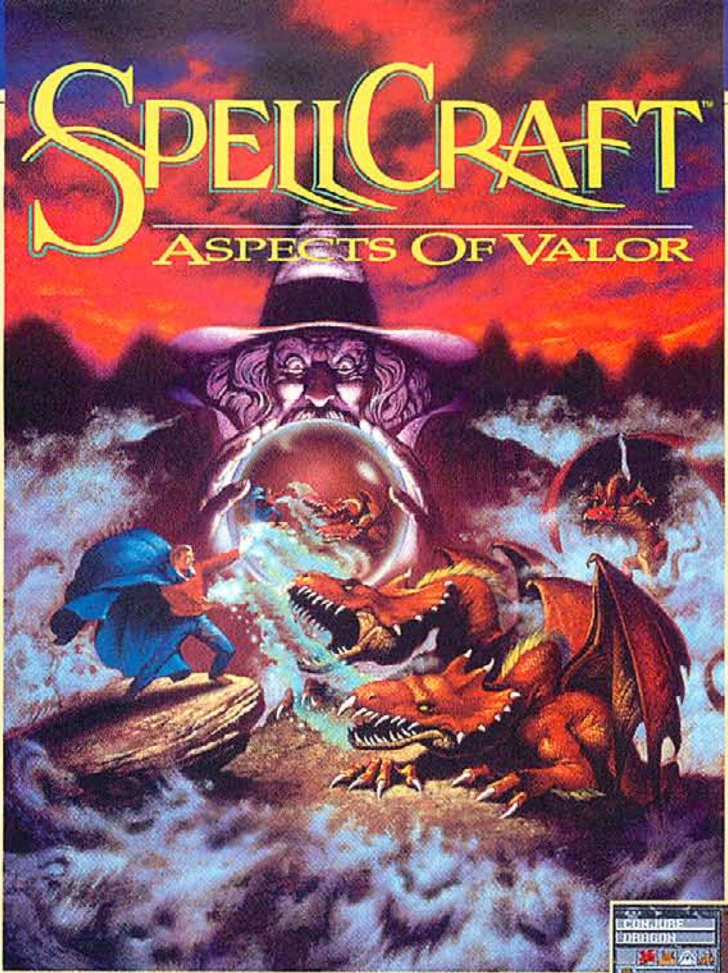
Friday, September 4 (9:30 A.M. PDT): My publisher and I met in his office to discuss the story. We had hoped to have a voicemail message from Origin's CEO or a number to reach him by that time. We had neither, and Origin's switchboard wasn't answering. Worse yet, our PRODIGY liason (who could rush the story to "press") was planning to leave their White Plains, NY headquarters early to get the jump on the Labor Day holiday. Our problem was that companies usually make their announcements prior to market opening or immediately after market close. If the rumor were correct, the announcement could be made early Tuesday morning (the next day the stock market would be open, September 8) and we would lose our chance to break the story. If we could post the story upon market closing on Friday, though, we should be able to protect our sources and get the scoop. We called every likely source we could get in touch with from both companies and gave them the opportunity to deny the rumor. We told them that we were publishing the story as rumor if we did not hear from them by market close of that day.

We called our contacts at PRODIGY and informed them of the story and our intent to run it as rumor. By this time, continuing phone calls had us 99% certain that the rumor was solid. The catch was, we really don't even like to run rumors until we have confirmation that they're solid. This was putting our reputation on the line. We made contingency plans to upload the story by market close, but there was one problem. We had given the companies until 1:00 P.M. (PDT — market close) to contact us, but we had to upload the story by 12:30 P.M. (PDT) in order to get it on-line before Tuesday, September 8 (because of the holiday). By 12:00 P.M. (PDT), we had heard from no official sources. However, a series of phone calls began which forced our hand. We started receiving calls from solid sources on both coasts and Texas, providing new lines of evidence and solidifying the rumor. "Run it!" said our publisher, using his best Ben Bradlee impression. We posted the story as rumor, knowing we were reporting on the rumor rather than starting it, and worded the story carefully enough that we felt that the companies were covered from any charges of releasing inside information.

Tuesday, September 8 (9:15 A.M. PDT): No press release from either Electronic Arts or Origin. Could we have guessed wrong? Assistant Editor Chris Lombardi and I reread the PRODIGY article to prepare for damage control, just in case. Since we had not specifically said the deal would be announced on Tuesday, we decided to wait until the end of the week before deciding we were wrong. Meanwhile, the evidence continued to point to a deal.

Thursday, September 11 (4:10 P.M. PDT): Galen Svanas and Fred Schmidt of Origin call to confirm the deal, noting that some of the rumor story was dead on but suggesting that our pessimistic assumptions about Origin cash flow and employee morale were incorrect. By 4:15, EA's Holly Hartz calls for the first time since the conversation with the long pause. "It's true!" she says with obvious delight and we congratulate EA on their purchase of an excellent subsidiary to shore up their product needs.

Epilogue: If we hadn't printed the story as a rumor, we would have been putting our reputation on the line and, perhaps, the jobs of employees in both companies. The SEC does not like leaks and any other approach could have gotten some folks in trouble. As it was, PRODIGY readers could smile smugly on Friday, September 12 and state, "Oh, that! I read about that last week." We hope that being behind the scenes of this PRODIGY story will give readers a clue about how careful we try to be in covering the industry. We are not Woodward and Bernstein, but we do try to give our readers, in both *CGW* and on PRODIGY, the best coverage we can possibly provide. CGW



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